**University of Alberta**

# Cross-Cultural Competence and School Psychology: A Qualitative Study

by

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## Abstract

With the changing face of Canadian demographics, it has become increasingly important for school psychologists to integrate cross-cultural competence into their practice with children and youth of diverse backgrounds. To date, few studies have attempted to examine cross-cultural competence in school psychology and none of those have used qualitative research methods. Qualitative interviews were used to capture the experience and perceptions of 15 school psychologists with regard to cross-cultural competence. Guided by Sue and Sue's (1990) three dimensional model of cross-cultural competence, this research endeavoured to identify: a) how school psychologists express their cultural self-awareness; b) how they express their knowledge of other's culture; and c) the skills and techniques they use in their work with culturally diverse students. Based on qualitative analysis, many of the participants noted that aspects of self-awareness of their cultural background included: identifying their ancestral history, white racial identity, similarities and differences between themselves and their clients, and recognizing their limitations in their competence. Many participants expressed knowledge of other cultures, while other participants warned against making generalizing statements for concern of stereotyping and making incorrect judgments. Moreover, many participants raised challenges regarding their work with culturally diverse children and youth, related to test validity and unmeasured strengths in traditional assessments, and job expectations. Conversely, several participants believed that psycho-educational assessments provide useful information on culturally diverse students' ability to cope in Canadian schools. Obtaining the perspectives of school psychologists who work with culturally diverse clients seems vital in moving the field forward in its commitment to cross cultural issues.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing demographics of Canada have increased the need for establishing a knowledge base in the area of cultural diversity. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived during the 1990s, 17% were school-age children and youth between 5 and 16 years (Statistics Canada, 2002). Furthermore, many Canadian born children are raised in first-generation immigrant households, contributing to the 10.5% of the population with home languages other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2002). In contrast with the generally optimistic literature about immigrant and other culturally diverse children's school accomplishments, a significant number of culturally diverse children and youth are experiencing complex educational and psychological difficulties (Van Ngo, 2004). Canadian research also suggests that minority students, especially Aboriginal students, are more likely to be enrolled in basic and general level academic programs and they show disproportionately higher levels of school dropout than do other students (Ruck & Wortley, 2002). In Alberta, high school English as a Second Language students have overall non-completion rates between 61% and 74%, compared to 30 per cent for all Alberta high school students (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). As a result, many culturally-diverse children are referred to school psychologists for academic and/or emotional assistance. Unfortunately, while our school age population is becoming increasingly diverse, the school psychology profession has been often condemned for being culturally insensitive and/or discriminatory (Samuda, 1990; Sattler, 2000; Frisby & Crosby, 2005).

To illustrate, psycho-educational assessments have been criticized for being biased against culturally diverse students (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002).

Studies confirm that professionals often make incorrect assessments of student abilities because of cultural differences (Corson, 1998). Here in Canada, Goldstein (1988) and Common and Frost (1988) have questioned the appropriateness of intelligence tests normed on majority groups in North America being used on Aboriginal students. In addition, for more than 25 years multicultural students have been disproportionately represented in special education classes, and are more likely to be mislabelled and known for their underachievement in school (Cummins, 1987; Landry, 1987; Samuda, 1990; Senior, 1993). Furthermore, there is a dearth of research about treatment acceptability with ethnic minority populations in educational settings as well as an understanding of the cultural factors that might lead to differences with regard to treatment acceptability and treatment compliance (Boothe, Borrego, Hill & Anhalt, 2005).

To facilitate more culturally appropriate assessment and intervention practices, within the past few decades, school psychologists have been encouraged to develop and integrate various cross-cultural competencies in their repertoire of current roles and functions (Lynch & Hanson, 1998). Experts agree that multi/cross cultural competence is a necessary prerequisite to effective, affirming, and ethical work in school psychology. Despite the growing recognition that school psychologists need to acquire the knowledge and skills to be able to work effectively with a culturally diverse student population, cultural competence in school psychology has not been well reflected in the literature. Furthermore, there is limited research on how school psychologists themselves perceive and express their own cross-cultural competence. Understanding the perspectives of school psychologists is important because these perspectives undoubtedly influence how school psychologists work with culturally different students. Currently, there are no

qualitative studies regarding how school psychologists perceive, understand and experience their own cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills, which is the aim of the present study. This is of particular concern, given that they are the individuals who are working with culturally diverse students, and thus who are directly and indirectly responsible for their educational experiences and outcomes. Most school psychologists appear to rely on their own informal decision-making and few have well articulated procedures when working with culturally diverse students (Armour-Thomas & Gopaul-McNicol, 1998). As a result, the process of working with culturally different students is highly subjective and can vary greatly from psychologist to psychologist.

Throughout the history of the profession, school psychologists have assumed a variety of roles and functions in addressing the needs of students. Traditionally, assessments, facilitating direct and indirect interventions and consultation have been seen as the major roles of school psychologists (Fagan & Wise, 2000). All of these roles would be consistent with school psychologists' work with culturally diverse students. To illustrate, for decades the practice of psycho-educational assessment has been criticized for being culturally discriminatory. A common argument against the use of standardized tests is that these tests are most often standardized on a representative sample, therefore the majority of participants will come from the dominant group – European-Americans/Canadian and a minority of groups make up the rest of the sample (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002). In addition, there is evidence to suggest that children from varying cultural backgrounds interpret test items differently and bring to the test situation differing sets of expectations and knowledge (Armour-Thomas, 1992). There is also tremendous variation in experiences within and between cultural groups, since

constructs such as intelligence and emotional well-being, may have a different meaning or significance for different cultures (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002). Those cultural groups that are exposed to the competencies promoted by the assessment practices are therefore at an advantage (Samuda, 1990). As a result, new non-verbal testing instruments have been developed and strategies on how to adapt or modify testing procedures to make them more culturally appropriate have been made (Sattler, 2001).

From an exhaustive review of the literature, it appears that few studies have attempted to examine cross-cultural competence in the field of school psychology. In a research paper, Rogers et al. (1999) set out to offer practical illustrations and applications of the Cross-Cultural School Psychology Competencies developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 16 Task Force and to expand upon the content of the APA (1991) Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Cultural, and Linguistically Diverse Populations. From a review of the literature, Rogers et al. identified over 50 important specific professional practices. Recently Rogers and Lopez (2002) set out to identify which competencies "expert" school psychologists believe to be most important to delivering effective, appropriate, and sensitive services to multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual clients in the schools. Statistical analyses of questionnaire responses found 102 critical cross-cultural competencies identified by these "experts" in the field. Although these studies present a first step to identifying cross-cultural competencies, many questions remain regarding how school psychologists understand, reflect, and express their cross-cultural competence.

Most conceptualizations of cross-cultural competence have evolved in the field of counselling psychology, in particular from the seminal work by Sue and Sue (1990) and

later revised by Sue, Arrendendo and McDavis (1992). Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework incorporated three primary areas, known as dimensions: multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. The first domain, awareness of one's own cultural assumptions, biases, and beliefs is based on the belief that in order to be able to work effectively with another cultural group, people must first understand their own cultural heritage. After psychologists become familiar with their own culture and its possible affects on the ways in which they think and behave, the foundation for learning about other cultures has been laid. The second dimension recognizes that the culturally skilled helping professional has specific knowledge about the cultural groups he or she works with. The third and final dimension outlined by Sue and Sue (1990) deals with specific skills, such as those strategies and techniques applied in assessment intervention, and consultation. Cultural competence can therefore be defined as the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences. There is, however, virtually no information documenting school psychologists' perspectives and perceptions on their cross-cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Consequently, the purpose of the present study was to obtain information on the perspectives of school psychologists on their cross-cultural competence by focusing on Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural competence framework consisting of psychologists' awareness of their cultural background, their knowledge of other cultures and the skills and the strategies they apply in their work with culturally diverse students. In the following section, the study's purpose and importance are outlined.

*Importance of the Study*

The practice of school psychology has been often criticized for being culturally insensitive. For decades now, school psychology has been condemned for the role it plays as classifiers and gatekeepers of special education programs and the importance placed on standardized tests (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002). Perhaps no legal decision has so greatly affected psychological assessment as the California suit known as The Larry P. versus Riles case of 1971. This case has been classified the "premier case involving bias in intelligence tests and placing children in programs for the mildly retarded" (Prasse & Reschley, 1986, p. 333 as cited in Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002). This was a class action suit filed on behalf of African-American students who had been inappropriately and disproportionately placed in special education classes based on standardized IQ tests. The decision was in favour of the plaintiff; it found that the school's methods of evaluating and placing students were inappropriate in as standardized tests were determined to be discriminatory toward African-American students in special education classes. Vera (1998) argues that since that famous case, minority students continue to be plagued by inequities within the educational structure and that there is an intense need to re-examine the policies and practices that produce inequities in education. To illustrate, studies confirm that professionals often make incorrect assessments of student abilities because of cultural differences (Corson, 1998). Within the Canadian context, Goldstein (1988) and Common and Frost (1988) have questioned the appropriateness of different intelligence tests normed for different cultural groups in North America to be used on Aboriginal students in Canada. Furthermore, Majhanovich and Majhanovich (1993) discuss equity issues in the assessment and

placement of immigrants in a Toronto school board. Meanwhile Goldstean (1988) looked at biases present in Aboriginal assessment in a Vancouver board. Cummins (1987), Landry (1987) and Samuda (1990) have discussed the over-representation of minority children in classes for the 'learning disabled.' Cummins attributes this to the incorrect use of tests in psychological assessments with minority children. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that children from varying cultural backgrounds interpret test items differently and bring to the test situation differing sets of expectations and knowledge (Li, 1994; Cole & Siegel, 2003). There is also tremendous variation in experiences within and between cultural groups, since constructs such as intelligence and emotional well-being, may have different meaning or significance for different cultures (Corson, 1998). Those cultural groups that are exposed to the competencies promoted by the assessment practiees are therefore at an advantage. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research about treatment acceptability with ethnic minority populations in educational settings as well as understanding of cultural factors that might lead to differences with regard to treatment acceptability and treatment compliance (Boothe, Borrego, Hill & Anhalt, 2005).

Finally, at least the first two principles of the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (CPA, 2001), Respect for the Dignity of Persons and Responsible Caring, may be interpreted to apply to acting in a diversity-sensitive way. An explicit statement regarding ethical psychologists refraining from "demeaning descriptions of others, including jokes based on culture, nationality, ethnicity, colour, race, religion, gender, etc." (p. 2) emphasizes that acceptance of and respect for the diversity characteristics of Canadian society is essential for ethical practice. The principle of Responsible Caring

suggests that ethical psychologists must determine whether or not the techniques used in research and practice constitute a form of unjust discrimination.

In an age of an increasingly diverse student population and a rising urgency for psychologists to be held accountable, there is an increased push from the general public and the field of educational psychology to make measurable improvements in school assessments and other practices in school psychology (e.g., Frisby & Reynolds, 2005). As part of this movement, there has been a call to end cultural discrimination and insensitivity in school psychology. Further energizing the position that school psychologists demonstrate cultural responsiveness and sensitivity in their practice and services is the reality that in many school psychology training programs multicultural issues of school-age children are not infused consistently throughout these programs (Rogers, Hoffman, & Wade, 1998; Rogers, Ponterotto, Conoley, & Wiese, 1992). As a result, psychologists in the schools many not feel prepared to address the mental health and academic needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Constantine & Sue, 2005). In order to make progress, and to have school psychologists who are indeed culturally competent practitioners, we need to have open and honest discussions that will facilitate a better understanding about issues related to cross-cultural competence and diversity. The present study will encourage such a discussion to occur.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## *Overview*

As the composition of Canadian schools becomes increasingly diverse, the demand and pressure for professionals to be able to work appropriately, effectively and sensitively within a range of different cultural contexts has increased. Although the conceptualization of cross-cultural competence has long been commonplace within the field of counselling psychology, there is a dearth of research focusing on cross-cultural competence within the field of school psychology, especially from the perspective of the psychologist.

The first section of this chapter will describe the ethnic and linguistic composition of Canadian society, focusing on the demographics of Alberta and Edmonton, which are the sites involved in the present study. In the second section, the definitions of culture and cross-cultural competence will be briefly reviewed. In the third section, the ethical requirements for cross-culturally competent psychologists will be outlined. The fourth section will outline the literature concerning cultural issues and psych- educational assessments. The criticisms against the different types of assessment including: intellectual, academic, social, and emotional will be discussed. Understanding the potential biases in the psycho-educational assessment of culturally diverse students helps provide the rational for psychologists being culturally competent practitioners. In the fifth section, the findings of major studies that examined cross-cultural competence in the field of school psychology will be described. In the final section Sue and Sue's (1990) model of Cross-Cultural Counselling Competence will be examined, focusing on the three

domains: self-awareness, knowledge of other cultures, and the application of culturally appropriate techniques and skills.

*Ethnic and Linguistic Background of Canada*

According to the 2006 Canadian Bureau of the Census, the proportion of Canada's population who were born outside the country has reached its highest level in 75 years. As of May 15, 2001, 5.4 million people, or 18.4% of the total population, were born outside Canada. Between 1991 and 2000 alone, 2.2 million immigrants were admitted to Canada, the highest number for any decade in the past century (Statistics Canada, 2003). Of the foreign-born children in Canada 50% have been resettled less than five years and 33% less than three years. Of the 1.8 million immigrants who arrived during the 1990's, 309,700, or 17%, were school children aged between five and 16. In Alberta, 14.5 per cent of immigrants are under the age of 25. In 2001, in the city of Edmonton, immigrants made up 17.8 per cent of the total population. Of those who immigrated to Edmonton in the 1990's, the top ten source countries were the Philippines, India, China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Poland, United Kingdom, Bosnia or Herzegovina, and Lebanon (Van Ngo, 2004). Regarding the language most often spoken at home: in 2001, 61% of the immigrants who came in the 1990's used a non-official language as their primary home language (Statistics Canada, 2002). Immigration levels in Alberta have significantly increased in the last five years. According to the Edmonton Catholic School Board, enrolment patterns in the last five years have shown a 67 percent increase in the number of ESL identified students in their schools (Canadian School Board Association, 2006). In the 2002-03 school year, 26, 806 school age children were identified as ESL students in Alberta (Van Ngo, 2004). Most of these students come

from the Philippines, followed closely by Central America/South America countries, Vietnam and Eastern Europe. Many of the students have lived in war torn countries, including students arriving from Sudan, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone (Canadian School Board Association, 2006). In Edmonton, people with a non-official language mother tongue accounted for 19.2 per cent of the total population. The five leading non-official languages in Edmonton were Chinese, German, Ukrainian, Polish, and Punjabi. In 2002, 49.2 per cent of the immigrants to Edmonton knew neither English nor French.

The statistics presented above indicate that Canadian schools are composed of children and youth who have recently immigrated to Canada or who were born into culturally diverse families. The representation of students of culturally diverse backgrounds in schools provides a general rational for psychologists who work with those students to develop and exhibit cultural competence. When reviewing the existing literature published in the area of cross-cultural competence, it is important that readers understand what is meant when the terms culture and cross-culture competence are used. In the following section, the definition of these terms will be clarified.

*Definitions*

> Culture is a context where children develop their values, customs, and language. Culture determines the way we are raised and affects every aspect of our lives. Therefore, without accurate knowledge and understanding of a student's cultural and linguistic background, we cannot identify their needs correctly and cannot provide the most appropriate educational services. (Park, Pullis, Reilley, & Townhead, p.345)

Within the past few decades, the term culture has become a relatively popular term in mainstream psychology, used in both theoretical and empirical work. Unfortunately, however, many psychologists use the words culture, race, and ethnicity interchangeably—often leading to a misunderstanding of to what is being referred (Matsumoto, 2000). Although there is clearly some overlap among these concepts, there are some important differences, which must be highlighted in order for a clearer and fuller understanding of cross-cultural research (Matsumoto, 2000). According to Matsumoto, it is important to distinguish race from culture. Two people of the same race may be either very similar or very different in their cultural dispositions, and in their actual behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Another term often used interchangeably with race and culture is ethnicity. Ethnicity is most widely used to describe different types of people, and it appears to include concepts of both race and culture. In Canada: First Nations, African Canadians, and Asians are all examples of categories that are typically referred to as ethnic groups. For the present study the definition of culture is taken from Matsumoto's book (2000) *Culture and psychology: People around the world.* He defines culture as:

> A dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours, shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time (p. 24).

The term cross-cultural competence, although a relatively new term to the field of psychology and education, has been defined in many different ways and used in a wide

range of contexts. Major associations and agencies that represent school psychologists have developed their own definition of cross-cultural competence to assist and guide their service providers. For example, The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) defines cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (http://www.nasponsline). Cross-cultural competence is defined by the American Psychological Association as,

> abilities to: recognize cultural diversity; understand the role that culture and ethnicity/race play in the socio-psychological and economic development of ethnic and culturally diverse populations; understand that socioeconomic and political factors significantly impact the psychosocial, political and economic development of ethnic and culturally diverse groups; help clients to understand/maintain/resolve their own sociocultural identification; and understand the interaction of culture, gender, and sexual orientation on behaviour and needs. (http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/guide.html)

The guide *Cultural Competency – A Self-Assessment Guide for Human Service Organizations* (2000), developed at the Cultural Diversity Institute (CDI) at the University of Calgary, defines cultural competence as: "A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or profession that enables the system, agency or profession to achieve cultural diversity and to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Van Ngo, 2004). In the field of Counselling Psychology, Derald Sue and colleagues are perhaps the most cited and well-known researchers for

their work on cross-cultural competencies. According to Sue (1998) et al., being multi-culturally competent means the ability to, "free one's personal and professional development from the unquestioned socialization of our society and profession" (p. 37). Sue and Sue's (1990) framework of cross-cultural competence outlined three key areas of cross-cultural competency: (a) cultural awareness of own assumptions, values, and biases, attitudes, knowledge and skill; (b) understanding the worldview of the culturally different client; and (c) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. In this study, the definition provided by Reynolds (1999) will be used as it incorporates the three dimensions of Sue and Sue's (1990) framework, "cultural competence can be defined as the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to work effectively and ethically across cultural differences (p. 215). The following section examines the Canadian Psychological Association Code of Ethics; the literature on how the field of school psychology has been condemned for being insensitive and/or inappropriate towards different cultural groups; and the recommendations for best practices in school psychology.

*Canadian Psychological Association Code of Ethics*

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) mandates competence as a part of ethical practice. Under Principle IV: Responsibility to Society: the CPA *Code of Ethics,* (2000) established two standards that specifically address cultural issues. Psychologists are expected to:

IV.15. Acquire an adequate knowledge of the culture, social structure, and customs of a community before beginning any major work there.

IV.16. Convey respect for and abide by providing community mores, social customs, and cultural expectations in their scientific and professional activities, provided that this does not contravene any ethical principals of this *Code*.

The revised *Guidelines for Non-Discriminatory Practice* (CPA, 2001) describe specific practices that psychologists should follow when working with culturally diverse clients. This document encourages psychologists to: be aware of their own cultural attitudes; be aware of power differentials; study cultural norms of diverse groups; keep cultural differences in mind when discussing confidentiality, informed consent, and treatment decisions; re-evaluate their own competence, attitudes and effectiveness when working with diverse clients; and consult with others who are more culturally competent.

The American Psychological Association Code of Ethics (APA, 2002) is more directive concerning the manner in which diversity is discussed. According to the APA's Principle on Respect for People's Rights and Dignity,

> Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality and self-determination. Psychologists are aware that special safeguards may be necessary to protect the rights of persons or communities who vulnerabilities impair autonomous decision making. Psychologists are aware of and respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socio-economic status and consider these factors when working with members of such groups. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on

those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone activities of others based upon such prejudices (p.4).

*Standard 2.01 Boundaries of Competence* requires psychologists to develop cross-cultural competence:

Where scientific or professional knowledge in the discipline of psychology establishes that an understanding of factors associated with age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language or socio-economic status, is essential for effective implementation of their services or research: psychologists must either have or obtain the training, experience, consultation, or supervision necessary to ensure the competence of their services, or make appropriate referrals, except as provided in Standard 2.02, Providing Services in Emergencies (APA, 2002, p. 5).

*Cultural Inappropriateness in School Psychology*

Despite diversity in school psychologists' preparation and credentialing, within Canada their services tend to focus on educational and psychological assessment (Saklofske et al., 2000). Assessment is in general, a process intended to "elicit a sample of behaviour from a set of tasks within a given domain in order to make judgments about an individual's probable behaviour relative to that domain" (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002, p. 31). This process generally includes organizing testing materials, administering tests, interpreting test scores, and writing reports for students, teachers, and parents. The use of standardized tests in psycho-educational assessments on children from culturally diverse backgrounds has been widely debated in the literature; some of the arguments will be discussed below.

A common argument against the use of standardized tests is that these tests are most often standardized on the dominant group. This means that in the case of Canadian society European-Canadians will make up the majority of the sample. This implies that during the early stages of item development, the majority of items selected will reflect, to some extent, the prior learning experiences of the majority groups (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002).

Concern over the limited validity of assessment practice for English Language Learners (ELL) students has grown. Many standardized tests are technically inadequate or result in test scores that have different meanings when given to ELL student (Shinn, 1998). Research has shown that even with well-known and respected instruments, the greater the use of a language other than English in the home, the lower the predictive validity of the tests (Figueroa & Garcia, 1994).

Another common argument against standardized tests is that they tend to measure lower-level skills as opposed to creative and critical thinking (e.g., problem solving, decision making) (Powell, 2000). For instance, Powell (2000) argues, "items on reading tests given to young children often test the ability to read and understand connected text; even the accompanying "comprehension questions" are based upon short, contrived passages and are therefore generally trivial and meaningless" (2000, p. 181).

There are critics who argue that standardized tests are culturally unfair as children from varying cultural backgrounds interpret test items differently (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998). These critics argue that because there is considerable variation in experiences within and between cultural groups, constructs such as intelligence and emotional well-being may have a different meaning or significance.

Those cultural groups that are exposed to the competencies promoted by the assessment practices are therefore at more of an advantage than those cultural groups that are not exposed to such competencies (Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002).

It has been argued in the literature that standardized, uniform testing materials and procedures may be biased toward some cultural groups. Arguments include, although are not limited to, using an unrepresentative norming sample and test items that have different meanings for different cultural groups. The majority of psycho-educational assessments conducted by school psychologists consist of a battery of tests selected to assess the student's intellectual or cognitive functioning, academic abilities, and social/emotional/behavioural functioning. Each of these three broad areas of assessment has been criticized in the literature for being culturally inappropriate; some of the research will be discussed below.

*Assessing intellectual ability.* Traditional tests of intelligence, often named psychometric measures of IQ, are designed to tap mental abilities, many of which have been identified at various hierarchical levels. Proponents of standardized measures of mental ability justify the comparative judgments that are made about intellectual performance on the grounds that these measures meet three implicit criteria: (a) the tasks tap the cognitive processes underlying intellectual behaviour; (b) the tasks embody the attributes that require intellectual behaviour; and (c) the tasks reflect equivalent prior experiences (Armour-Thomas, 1992). Consequently many intelligence tests have linguistic components that require reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening (Brown, Sherbernou, & Johnsen, 1990). According to Figueroa and Garcia (1994), extensive research points to the disadvantage that bilingual learners face when asked to perform

encoding tasks in the weaker language. For example, for tasks such as reading, where naming speed is critical for comprehension, the bilingual learner can be put at a considerable disadvantage when timed tasks are required. Most often tests of cognitive ability, such as the third edition of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC III) group subtests into Verbal and Performance areas, which does not imply that these are the abilities involved in the test. The verbal components include skills designed to measure verbal reasoning and concept formation, auditory comprehension, memory, verbal expression, vocabulary, and degree of language development, word knowledge and verbal concept formation, verbal reasoning and conceptualization, expression and ability to acquire retain, and retrieve general factual knowledge. Numerous studies have shown consistent results that ELL perform significantly weaker on the Verbal areas (Michelson, 2005). Spatial, performance, and nonverbal tests have long been used in psychological testing. Although these tests have eliminated language from their content, they still vary substantially in the amount and type of language required both in their instruction and response formats and in their response modes (Brown, Sherbonou, & Johnsen, 1990). While it is true that language is a condition for performance on many intelligence tests, it is not a requirement for intelligence itself. This is evident when observing individuals that exhibit intelligence yet also have a language dysfunction. Research into intelligence testing has attempted to discover clear and measurable differences between cognitive test scores of European-Americans/Canadians and other cultural groups (Sattler, 2001; Dolan, 1999). For example, research using the WISC-R has found that for First Nations children residing in the United States, the Verbal IQ scores were as much as thirty points lower than the Performance IQ (Kaufman, 1994).

Dolan (1999) investigated the differences of scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Third Edition between Euro-Canadian children and First Nations children attending the same school in British Colombia. The results of this study indicated that Euro-Canadian males performed significantly higher on the Verbal IQ than their First Nations counterparts, but that differences between Euro-Canadian and First Nations students was less, albeit still appreciable, on the Performance (nonverbal) IQ.

Another concern regarding the reliability and validity of IQ tests that has been discussed in the literature is the belief that ability tests are not transportable from one culture to another and that the concept of intelligence and cognitive abilities are in large part cultural or "emic (culture specific) inventions" Some theorists assume that intelligence is made up of two factors, a general factor g and a number of very specific factors (e.g., Spearman, 1923 as cited in Armour-Thomas, 1992). Alternatively, as cited in Sattler (2001), Thurstone (1947) proposed seven "vectors," Guilford (1976) proposed 120 traits along three dimensions, and Gardner (1993) proposed seven relatively independent intelligences (i.e., mental skills, talents, or abilities). In addition, although psychometric studies of cognitive abilities have identified a number of cognitive processes that underlie performance in intelligence tests, there is no consensus about how many and which processes combine to produce behaviour of intelligence. Armour-Thomas (1992) argues that this lack of theoretical specificity of cognitive processes when describing intellectual behaviour is likely to favour some cultural groups, but hinder others in assessment situations.

Assessing academic abilities. As part of the psycho-educational assessment students are often given standardized academic achievement tests such as the Wechsler

Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), Woodcock-Johnson – Tests of Achievement, the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), etc. These tests are designed to assess students' academic functioning such as their ability to read, write, and complete mathematical tasks, similar to the work completed in schools. School psychologists are often confronted with the task of determining whether a bilingual student's lack of academic progress is due to language ability or due to a learning disability. When students receive low scores on such standardized achievement measures, the school psychologist often interprets the results as indicators of low academic ability. However, it has been argued that the attribution for low scores may reflect more in background experiences and contexts and language acquisition as opposed to the development and expression of academic competence. To illustrate, many children from culturally diverse backgrounds, although they may have basic interpersonal communicative and language skills, may not have the cognitive academic language proficiency skills often required by academic performance tests and thus perform poorly on such tests. Most standardized achievement measures are administered in English and normed on native English speaking individuals, they may inadvertently function as English language proficiency tests. ELL learners may be unfamiliar with the linguistically complex structure of test questions, may not recognize vocabulary terms, or may mistakenly interpret literally (Garcia, 1991). Furthermore, a well-documented fact in cognitive psychology is the critical role of prior academic knowledge and skills in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Students with low scores on standardized achievement tests may not have had the prerequisite knowledge and skills in the particular academic domains that current assessment presumes they should have. In a study of within-group diversity of disproportionate

representation of ELL students in special education, Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, and Higareda (2005) found that ELL identified by districts as having limited proficiency in both their native language (L1) and English (L2) showed the highest rates of identification in the special education categories investigated, were consistently overrepresented in learning disabilities and language and speech disabilities classes, and had greater chances of being placed in special education classes. Thus, language factors are likely to reduce the validity and reliability of inferences drawn about students' content-based knowledge, as stated in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education [AERA, APA, & NCME], 1999):

> For all test takers, any test that employs language is, in part, a measure of their language skills. This is of particular concern for test takers whose first language is not the language of the test. Test use with individuals who have not sufficiently acquired the language of the test may introduce construct-irrelevant components to the testing process. In such instances, test results may not reflect accurately the qualities and competencies intended to be measured....Therefore it is important to consider language background in developing, selecting, and administering tests and in interpreting test performance. (p. 91)

Findings from a series of studies conducted by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) on the impact of students' language background on their performance indicated that (a) student language background affects students' performance in content-based areas such as math and

science, and (b) the linguistic complexity of test items may threaten the validity and reliability of achievement tests, particularly for ELL students (see Abedi, 2002). To examine the impact of students' language background on the validity of standardized achievement tests, Abedi (2002) performed analyses to compare criterion validity coefficients for ELL and non-ELL students and to examine differences between the structural relationship of ELL and non-ELL groups. Descriptive analyses revealed that ELL students generally perform lower than non-ELL students on reading, science, and math subtests. The level of impact of language proficiency on the assessment of ELL students was found to be greater in content areas with a higher level of language demand—a strong indication of the impact of English language proficiency on assessment (Abedi, 2002). Thus, the literature on the assessment of ELL's clearly suggests that language factors confound the test results of English language learners.

*Social/emotional/behavioural assessment*. Often part of the psycho-educational assessment is an evaluation of the student's social, and/or emotional, and/or behavioural functioning. When working with a student who has been referred for an emotional/behavioural assessment, school psychologists may find that families from different cultural backgrounds may reject the view that their student's behaviour or emotions are problematic or abnormal. According to Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2000), where perceptions of behaviour between the school and home are substantially different, a student's behaviour may still be deemed inappropriate in school, but its meaning will not be fully understood unless school psychologists know the context from which the behaviour is derived. Furthermore, school psychologists need to be careful not to under-identify or over-identify questionable student behaviours because of difficulties

interpreting their behaviour (Kalyanpur, Harry & Skrtic, 2000). For example, an Asian student's compliancy may be misinterpreted as being reserved and not that the student may need assistance. Rodriguez (2000) argues that the checklists, rating scales, and structured interviews that are widely used in the assessment of social and emotional disorders do not have a research base to substantiate their use with ethnically diverse children and adolescents. In a recent book, *Naughty Boys, Anti-Social Behaviour, ADHD and the Role of Culture*, Timimi (2005) argues that in mainstream psychology the professional language revolves around the notions of 'deficit.' As professionals, we are trained to search for a deficit, and to diagnose any behaviour that does not fit our cultural opinion of 'normal.' As Timimi (2005) explains, "Every culture defines what it means to be considered a normal child, how children should look and act, what is expected of them and what is considered beyond their capabilities" (p. 2).

To summarize, the practices of school psychology have often been criticized for being culturally insensitive. Criticisms against the use of standardized intellectual measures include the lack of consensus of what is intelligence and how to accurately measure it. Standardized achievement measures have been condemned for being culturally inappropriate as; for example, second language learners often do not have the prerequisite language ability. Emotional/behavioural measurements have also been criticized because what is considered acceptable and normal behaviours and emotions are often culture specific. In response to such criticisms and accusations and to facilitate the development of culturally appropriate practices in school psychology, various educators, practitioners, and researchers have made recommendations on various skills, strategies,

and knowledge that psychologists should have or acquire. The literature regarding these recommendations will be discussed below.

*Best Practices in Cognitive Assessment*

In response to the problems raised by critics regarding the validity of cognitive assessments, test designers have attempted to construct culture-fair tests or to modify testing procedures and test items with the aim of minimizing test biases (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). Typical strategies to accomplish these goals include: (a) using test materials that are primarily non-verbal and include diagrams or pictures familiar to the cultural group being tested; (b) including motivating materials and methods to encourage optimal test performance; and (c) providing liberal time limits to de-emphasize speed as a factor. The most widely used intellectual tests developed to address cultural bias are the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC), the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Tests (NNAT), the Test on Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI), and the newly published (2006) Wechsler Nonverbal Scales of Ability (Suzuki, Ponterotto, & Meller, 2001). Naglieri and Ford (2003) conducted a study that examined the identification of minority students for giftedness using the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). The NNAT is not considered to be cultural-biased, mainly because it does not require the student to read, write, or speak during the examination (Naglieri, 1997). This study measured the scores of over 20,000 students, with the majority of the sample being white. Naglieri and Ford (2003) found no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the White and Hispanic students. The researchers concluded that the NNAT would be an effective assessment to identify gifted Hispanic students and address the concern of under-representation.

Other researchers have made recommendations on how to conduct a more culturally appropriate and sensitive cognitive assessment. According to Dana (1999), moderator variables such as differential socialization and educational experiences, levels of acculturation, or socio-demographic classifications, should be assessed to ascertain the extent to which they affect an examinee's performance. These data should be used in the interpretation of the performance of children from culturally diverse backgrounds from the one on which the IQ test was normed. To gather qualitative data on the impact of context interviews, questionnaires and behavioural observations should be used (see Gopaul-McNicol & Armour-Thomas, 2002, for examples of such procedures). Sattler (2001) has also made several general recommendations of culturally competent skills that school psychologists should utilize in cognitive assessment.

*Best Practices in Assessing Emotional/Behavioural Functioning*

Casey (2001) makes several recommendations on what skills school psychologists should apply to enhance cultural sensitivity in the assessment of social/emotional behavioural functioning. First, Casey contends that school psychologists need to consider what aspects of social/emotional/behavioural functioning are indicated in the assessment, and whether they are likely to be influenced by the culture. Second, a culturally competent school psychologist should consider the student's degree of acculturation to the majority culture. Third, Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2000) recommend that the psychologist sample a wide range of behaviour in different contexts and see what patterns emerge. Finally, school psychologists should only use social-emotional instruments that adequately sample the social functioning within the culture of the person being assessed and/or that it comes from multiple perspectives (Casey, 2001).

*Best Practices when Working with Culturally-Diverse Families*

It is well known that parental involvement in schooling is positively associated with many benefits for students (see Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Derald Sue has done extensive work on culturally appropriate practices in the field of counselling psychology. According to Sue et al., (1998) culturally competent psychologists have a knowledge and understanding of minority family structures, hierarchies, values, and beliefs. These psychologists are knowledgeable about the community characteristics and the resources in the community as well. Furthermore, Ortiz and Flanagan (2002) contend that school psychologists can provide culturally relevant services to families of different cultural backgrounds only if they understand the fundamental cultural aspects of the family system.

To promote family involvement in the culturally diverse child's school life, Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2000) argues that competent school psychologists need to have strong interpersonal skills. Harry's (1992) ethnographic study of 12 Puerto Rican American families whose children were receiving special education services for mild disabilities found that the only consistent role offered to families was that of consent-giver. Harry argues, "It will be up to professionals to provide communication structures that will make dialogue possible and mutual understanding likely" (p. 239). To accomplish this, Harry suggests that professionals, for example, school psychologists, provide parents with the opportunity to be actively involved throughout the special education process. According to Harry these functions place parents in a meaningful, active role during conferences and enable professionals to better understand a parent's

intimate knowledge of their children, including the many experiences and cultural aspects that may account for the child's development, learning, and behavioural patterns.

Since the early 1970's there has been a tremendous increase in both the literature and graduate training programs addressing the need for school psychology practices to be more culturally appropriate. To help accomplish this, numerous recommendations have been made by researchers, practitioners, and educators; these including conducing a more ecological assessment, adapting existing testing procedures, being aware of the student's level of acculturation, and working sensitively and appropriately with the individual student's family. The acquisition of such behaviours, knowledge, and skills assist the school psychologist in becoming cross-culturally competent. The following section will outline the research regarding cross-cultural competence within the field of psychology beginning with recent efforts on how major psychological associations have addressed issues related to cross-cultural competence.

*Cross Cultural Competence Research in School Psychology*

The field of school psychology has not escaped the changing demographics of American and Canadian society (Miranda & Gutter, 2002). Within the past two decades, major organizations, such as the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA), and the Canadian Association of School Psychologists (CASP), have addressed cross-cultural competence in a variety of ways. For example, diversity issues are addressed in the standards of all the professional associations. In addition, APA and NASP have standing committees dedicated to addressing the issue (Cole & Siegel, 1990; Miranda, 2002). On the NASP website, an entire section is dedicated to promoting the

development of cultural competence in school psychology. The APA Multicultural Guidelines (APA, 2003) offer six broad recommendations that underscore the importance of professional psychology's response to social, demographic and cultural change. These recommendations focus on the psychologist's own cultural background including their: worldviews, knowledge of cultural values, socio-political histories of culturally diverse groups, and ethnic and racial identity theories; the employment of multicultural constructs, conducting culture-centred research, the application of culturally appropriate skills and practices, and organizational change processes to support culturally appropriate practices (APA, 2003).

According to Miranda and Gutter (2002), although cross-cultural competence has been addressed at the organizational level, it has not necessarily filtered down to training, practice, and the professional school psychology literature. Miranda and Gutter (2002) conducted a review of the literature of all research published, between 1990 and 1999, in four major school psychology journals: *Journal of School Psychology*, *Psychology in the Schools*, *School Psychology Quarterly* and *School Psychology Review*. This was to determine if the articles within these journals contained culturally diverse individuals, topics, or issues as its primary focus. Of the 140 articles reviewed, 10.6% were identified as articles dealing with diversity. For all four journals, assessment was the most frequent topic in relation to diversity, with intellectual assessment the most common type of assessment discussed. Intervention accounted for 13% of the articles with more articles focusing on academic interventions. Of the articles analyzed, 68 % were of an empirical nature and 32% were conceptual, descriptive, or discussion pieces. This study found that the cultural diversity content of research in school psychology only increased about 2%

from the previous decade. According to the authors, this is of concern as literature reflects what is going on in the field (Miranda & Gutter, 2002). Although Miranda and Gutter noted that, there is no one reason why there are so few studies relating to diversity in the school psychology literature, they report that, "A recognition and acceptance that our field in lacking in this area of research is needed" (p. 603).

In the new millennium, several writings have addressed, both empirically and conceptually, the need for school psychologists to be culturally competent (Curtis, Hunley, Walker, Baker 1999; Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Constantine & Sue, 2005; Frisby & Reynolds, 2005). Professionals and educators have written about how school psychologists can best promote cultural sensitivity and limit cultural biases and discrimination in their roles and functions based on their expert opinion. In school psychology, the cultural diversity literature has focused primarily on assessment practices particularly as it relates to assessment bias. This is likely because the most visible diversity issues in school psychology have come about as a result of various court cases. Thus, in the past 25 years significant attention has been focused on culturally appropriate testing practices (Miranda & Gutter, 2002). In addition, testing has been the activity that the majority of psychologists engage in the most. A recent book titled *Comprehensive Handbook of Multicultural School Psychology* (2005), edited by Craig L. Frisby and Cecil R. Reynolds, dedicates 1,128 pages to the discussion of multicultural school psychology in the United States by focusing on defining multicultural school psychology, outlining cultural variation in diverse subgroups, educational foundations, psychological foundations, testing and assessment, training and legal issues and international school psychology (including Canada). Throughout the book, educators and/or school

psychologists offer their perspectives and opinions on how (and why) a school psychologist should work with culturally diverse students. Another recent book, *Strategies for Building Multicultural Competence in Mental Health and Educational Settings* (2005, edited by Constantine and Sue) also dedicates a chapter to the application of multicultural competencies to psychologists working in schools focusing on psycho-educational assessment. These books provide extensive information on best practices when providing school psychological services to culturally diverse students.

Concerning empirical research, Rogers and Lopez et al., are psychologists/researchers who have studied cross-cultural competence in school psychology in the United States. Rogers et al., (1999), set out to synthesize some of the existing knowledge about how best to promote the educational and psychological well-being of diverse students and their families, as well as make recommendations for psychologists working in the schools. The purpose of the study was to offer practical illustrations and applications of the Cross-Cultural School Psychology Competencies developed by the American Psychological Association (APA) Division 16 Task Force and to expand upon the content of the APA (1991) Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services to Ethnic, Cultural, and Linguistically Diverse Populations. From a review of the literature, Rogers et al. identified over 50 important specific professional practices organized in the following six domains: (a) ethical issues (e.g., psychologists who work in the schools are knowledgeable about information sources regarding immigration laws, and laws regarding residency, citizenship and migrant families); (b) school culture, educational policy and institutional advocacy (e.g., within schools are institutions serving culturally and linguistically diverse students, psychologists take a

proactive stance to enhance the level and quality of services provided to all individuals); (c) psycho-educational assessment and related issues (e.g., psychologists consider cultural sources of information about students and search for culture specific confirming data); (d) academic, therapeutic, and consultative interventions (e.g., psychologists understand the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children in terms of curriculum and instruction); (e) working with interpreters (e.g., psychologists have knowledge of the skills needed by qualified interpreters); and (f) research (e.g., psychologists consider the social, linguistic and cultural context in which the research takes place).

Recently, Rogers and Lopez (2002) set out to identify which competencies "expert" school psychologists (i.e., experts were qualified as having either presented at two or three major conferences, or been an primary author, or a professor on relevant cross-cultural topics in school psychology) believe to be most important to delivering effective, appropriate, and sensitive services to multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual clients in the schools. To identify the competencies they first conducted an extensive literature search on the cross-cultural competencies relevant to school psychology practice. Rogers and Lopez then asked the experts in cross-cultural school psychology to rate the importance of the literature based competencies and to provide additional competencies not represented in the integrated literature but based on their expert opinion. Statistical analyses of questionnaire responses identified 102 critical cross-cultural competencies identified by these "experts" in the field. These competencies were then compiled into 14 categories. From the "most critical" competence category to the "least critical" competence category respectively were (1) assessment; (2) report

writing; (3) laws and regulation (e.g., psychologists should have knowledge and skills regarding the application of laws and regulations to protect against discrimination); (4) working with interpreters; (5) working with parents; (6) theoretical paradigms (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the strengths and limitations of the major theoretical paradigms that operate in school psychology); (7) counselling (e.g., psychologists have skill assessing the acculturation of the client); (8) professional characteristics (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the client's culture, values, worldview, etc.,); (9) consultation; (10) culture (e.g., the psychologist has knowledge about the interaction of culture and assessment); (11) academic interventions; (12) research methods (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the need to consider socio-cultural variables and perspectives); (13) working with organizations; and (14) language. Rogers and Lopez argue that this research has implications for the cross-cultural training of future and existing school psychologists in that the study enables trainers to have an explicit understanding of specific cross-cultural competencies that were identified by experts as most relevant to the delivery of school psychological services.

The available research on cross-cultural competence within the field of school psychology has focused primarily on identifying specific professional behaviours, skills and strategies. A common thread among all these competencies is that they fit under the Cross-Cultural Counselling Competence framework set out by Sue and Sue (1990). In the following section Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural competence framework will be described, outlining the three dimensions: self-awareness, knowledge, and skills.

*Sue and Sue's Cross-Cultural Competence Framework*

In a review of the literature within the area of counselling psychology, there is an abundance of research investigating cross-cultural competence using quantitative and qualitative methods. In recent decades, counselling psychologists have been key figures among applied psychologists addressing multicultural issues in academic curricula, training, supervision, practice, and research (e.g., Ancis & Ladany, 2001; Coleman, 1996; Constantine, 1997; Helms, 1990; Ridley et al., 1994; Sue et al., 1990). In particular, much emphasis has been placed on developing theoretical models, such as multi-cultural counselling competence models (e.g., Sue et al., 1992) and the operationalization of multicultural counselling competence (e.g., Arrendondo et al., 1996, Sue et al., 1992).

Over twenty years ago, Sue and colleagues published the well-known American Psychological Association Division 17 Cross-Cultural Counselling Competencies, which were subsequently refined in 1992 by the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Although Sue and Sue's (1990) work was to be applied to the field of Counselling Psychology, their general framework can be applied to all fields of professional psychology, including school psychology. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term counsellor and psychologist will be used interchangeably. Sue and Sue's (1990) framework consists of three major dimensions that practitioners need to work on to become culturally competent. Sue et al., (1982, 1992) tripartite conceptualization of multicultural counselling competence consists of counsellor awareness, knowledge and skills in working with culturally diverse clients. Although these competencies outlined by Sue et al. (1998) and further developed by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) are left as inspirational ideas and are not

operationalized, they allow for groups and individuals to operationalize them in a meaningful fashion to fit their needs and concerns. Additionally, they allow practitioners to establish the specific parameters of cultural competence in their field, as was done in this study. In the following section, the three dimensions of Sue and Sue's (1990) framework will be described in more detail.

*Dimension #1: Developing a personal awareness.* The first dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) framework focuses on the practitioner's attitudes and beliefs about their own race, culture and ethnicity; the need to verify their biases and stereotypes; and their awareness of the limitations of their own knowledge and expertise. As Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) write, "a culturally competent counsellor is one who is actively in the process of becoming aware of his or her own assumptions about human behaviour, values, biases, preconceived notions, personal limitations, and so forth" (p. 481). This is based on the belief that in order to be able to work effectively with another cultural group, people must first understand their own cultural background. In this domain, psychologists are aware of how their own cultural background and experiences, attitudes, values and biases influence their work with culturally diverse individuals. It is believed that without such an awareness and understanding, psychologists may inadvertently assume that everyone shares their same worldview. When this happens, psychologists may become guilty of cultural oppression by imposing values on their culturally diverse clients. A potential bias many psychologists may be confronted with is their biases of what is considered normality and abnormality (Miranda, 2002). A number of individuals have pointed out that the field of psychology tends to assume universal applications of their concepts and goals to the exclusion of culture-specific views (see Sue & Sue, 1990

for a review). According to Miranda (2000), members of the majority culture (i.e., Euro-Canadian) are often unaware of how their culture has influenced their values and beliefs and many have never fully examined where they came from and how they got to where they are.

Berry's (1970) influential theory of acculturation may help better understand how psychologists' personal strategy of acculturation may impact his/her beliefs and practices with culturally diverse clients. This proposal suggests that bicultural individuals differ widely in their attempts to manage their dual identities. Berry proposes four acculturation strategies that would be particularly relevant to the Canadian context where ethnic diversity is commonplace. He differentiates between separation, marginalization, assimilation, and integration. Separated individuals are described as primarily identifying with their ethnic culture, marginalized individuals identify with neither culture, assimilated individuals identify with their host culture, and integrated individuals tend to identify concurrently with both their host and ethnic cultures (Berry, 1970).

According to Sue, Patrick, & McDavis (1998) self-awareness involves recognition of differences in one's own worldview from that of others. It is believed that this process will enable psychologists to confront potential biases and prejudices. They are comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and clients in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and beliefs. In this domain, psychologists have moved from being culturally unaware to being aware and sensitive to their own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting differences. These psychologists are encouraged to reflect on how their cultural values and experiences of privilege and discrimination have shaped their perspectives as cultural beings. Thus, culturally competent psychologists working in

schools need to be cognizant of cultural stereotypes and assumptions that may be operative in their interactions with and regarding diverse student groups. Another aspect of psychologists being self-aware is they are able to recognize the limits of their competence and expertise when working with culturally diverse students. It is believed that honest and genuine cultural self-awareness and appraisal provides the foundation from which the cultural elements of others can be best understood; and that is the second dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990)Multicultural Competence Model (1992).

*Dimension #2: Knowledge of other cultures*. After psychologists become familiar with their own culture and its possible affects on the ways in which they think and behave, the foundation for learning about other cultures has been laid. The second dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework recognizes that the culturally competent psychologist is knowledgeable and understands his or her own worldview, and has specific knowledge about the cultural groups he or she works with. In other words, "a culturally skilled counsellor is one who actively attempts to understand the worldview of his or her culturally different client without negative judgements" (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992, p. 481). This does not imply that psychologists have to hold the worldviews of their clients, but they can accept them as another legitimate perspective.

According to Dana (1999), the basic components of a worldview are group identity, values, beliefs, and language. A group identity, or collective consciousness, is based on the unique history of development of cultural heritage and not only includes native language and group-sanctioned behaviours, but also the perceptions, values, and beliefs of health/illness, credible services, and service delivery styles (Dana, 1999). For

example, the Chinese perception of mental illness is that it is a result of an imbalance of Yin and Yang elements (Dana, 1999). Values include views of human nature (good, evil, or mixture of both), person-nature relationship, time focus (past, present, future), relationships with other persons (individualistic, collaterally), and human activity (doing, or being). Beliefs include the causes and nature of health and illness, spirituality, and the extent of perceived control and responsibility over one's own life. For example, in Euro-American society, physical health is ordinarily an absence of disease but other cultures may conceive health in holistic terms as a balance or harmony, and as a result, mental health may not be separable from physical health. According to Dana (1999), values, beliefs and language provide a basis for the perception of the need for particular services, relevant kinds of service, desired qualities of service providers, and a culturally acceptable style of service delivery. Therefore, a person's worldview provides a basis for how, for example, a child who is labelled learning disabled will be perceived by their family, if they are allowed to seek assistance from a school psychologist, and the types of desired qualities and styles of practice they will deem as acceptable from a school psychologist.

*Dimension #3: Applying the knowledge into skills based practice* . The third and final dimension, outlined by Sue and Sue (1990) deals with the specific skills, such as those strategies and techniques utilized in assessment and intervention, needed in working with culturally different groups. In other words, "a culturally skilled counsellor is one who is in the process of actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive interventions strategies and skills in working with his or her culturally different client" (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992, p. 481). The numerous specific best

practices that have been outlined in the literature and discussed previously would fit within this dimension. This includes, although is not limited to, assessments of culturally diverse students' cognitive, academic, social, emotional, and behavioural functioning, as well as the skills necessary to working and communicating effectively and appropriately with culturally diverse families.

In summary, cultural self-awareness involves an in-depth exploration of one's own cultural background; cultural knowledge is the process of learning about various cultures with the goal of understanding their worldview and cultural skills involves using a culturally sensitive approach to working with culturally diverse individuals. As Sue & Sue state (1999), "In order to be culturally competent, mental health professionals must be able to free themselves from the cultural conditioning of their personal and professional training, to understand and accept the legitimacy of alternative worldviews, and to begin the process of developing culturally appropriate intervention strategies in working with a diverse clientele (p. ix)."

Expanding on Sue and Sue's (1990) original tripartite Multicultural Counselling Competence model, Arredondo et al., (1996) explicated those skills falling under the domains of self-awareness, knowledge of other cultures, and culturally appropriate skills. For each domain, Arrendondo et al., (1996) provide explanatory statements describing the necessary attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and skills to become a culturally competent counsellor. Arrendondo et al., (1996) outline over 100 illustrative statements that define the competencies necessary to be a culturally competent counsellor. It is important to note, that of these 100 plus statements, many of them are specifically directed to the

practice of counselling and are not applicable to the practice of school psychology in Alberta.

Providing the first study to employ qualitative methodologies in the area of multicultural competence in counselling, Constantine, Melincoff, Barakett, Torino and Warren (2004) interviewed twelve counselling psychologists. When asked open-ended questions participants reported diverse views on the various aspects of multicultural counselling competence. Of particular interest was that participants noted that psychologists should be open-minded/flexible (e.g., openness to various cultures, ability to be non-judgemental). Participants also reported that multicultural competent counsellors have knowledge and awareness of the impact of demographic/cultural variables in peoples' lives. Concerning the type of skills that multicultural competent counsellors posses, participants reported the ability to make culturally sensitive therapeutic interventions and that they are able to integrate diagnostic and cultural factors into multicultural case conceptualizations. Most participants also reported that self-awareness is an aspect of multicultural counselling competence, in particular that people need to be aware of their biases/stereotypes/judgments/limitations (e.g., counsellors should posses an awareness of their own value systems). Another interesting finding is that some participants noted that they needed to be self-aware of their cultural identity including their racial, cultural, and ethnic being.

*Research Questions*

As discussed in the foregoing literature review, cross-cultural competence has been increasingly recognized within the field of psychology as a critical skill for psychologists working in today's multicultural/multiethnic society. With an increasingly

culturally diverse student population, it is imperative that today's school psychologists view each child and youth in a cultural context with the goal of providing optimal services. To accomplish this professional and ethical requirement, psychologists will need to become culturally competent. According to Sue and Sue's (1990) framework of cross-cultural competence, this involves a personal awareness, acquiring knowledge of other cultures, and applying the knowledge in skill-based practices. Although qualitative research methodologies generally have not been used to examine the area of school psychology, they have been identified as useful in providing potentially in-depth and highly descriptive data that are needed in order to advance multicultural research, training, and practice (Ponterotto, 1998). Guided by the literature in the area of multicultural counselling, specifically Sue and Sue's (1990) model of Cross-Cultural Competence, this research endeavoured to identify: a) how school psychologists express their cultural self-awareness; b) how they express knowledge of other cultures; and c) the skills and techniques they use in their work with culturally diverse students.

# CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

As a result of a review of the literature, it was evident that few articles addressing issues of cross-cultural competence existed in the field of school psychology. In order to generate knowledge and determine what psychologists think about their work with culturally diverse students, I chose a qualitative approach to the research as it was deemed appropriate relative to the level of inquiry currently evidenced in the literature. Qualitative methodologies have been identified as useful in providing potentially in-depth and highly descriptive data that are needed in order to advance multicultural research, training, and practice (Ponterotto, 1998). A basic, or generic qualitative postpositivist, interview design was used in this study. In this chapter, the research method, study sample, data collection, data analysis, ways for establishing rigour, and ethical considerations are described.

## *Paradigmatic and Methodological Framework*

In this qualitative study, I used the postpositivist interview design. During this collection of data, interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions. Typological analysis was subsequently accomplished using the strategies outlined extensively by Hatch (2002), and Miles and Huberman (1994), for data analysis. These strategies are described in the later part of this chapter.

Postpositivist researchers work to capture close approximations of reality and seek to maintain a relationship to the phenomenon they are studying (Hatch, 2002). Researchers in this paradigm see themselves as data collection instruments; they use disciplined research techniques to ensure that empirical data, and not their impressions, drive their findings. Postpositivist researchers use qualitative methods that prescribe

rigorous systematic techniques to improve validity and reliability. Knowledge forms produced in this paradigm include: analytic generalizations, descriptions, and patterns (Hatch, 2002).

Hatch (2002) supports the use of the basic interview design when a need exists to explore informant experiences and interpretations (Mishler, 1986; Spradely, 1979). In this study, I examined the participants' perspectives and used a sample of participants knowledgeable about the topic of interest (Dana, 1999).

Merriam (1998) stated that the basic qualitative study in education, "typically draws from concepts, models, and theories in educational psychology…Data are collected through interviews…findings are a mix of description and analysis that uses concepts from the framework of the study" (p. 11). In the present study, Sue and Sue's (1990) three dimensional (1990) Cross-Cultural Competence Framework was used specifically to guide and frame eight of the 12 interview questions as well as the data analysis.

In this study, semi-structured interview questions were used; each question was standardized and given in a preset manner, while permitting answers to be open and unstructured. Although I came to the interview with guiding questions, I was open to following the lead of the participants and probing into areas that arose during the interviews. The interview questions were as follows: (1) Can you tell me how you became a psychologist working with Edmonton and area school age children and youth; (2) Describe to me a typical work day; (3) Describe to me the types of referrals you receive; (4) Describe to me the types of clients you work with; (5) Describe to me their cultural background; (6) Describe to me your cultural background—for example, what

are your beliefs and values; (7) What knowledge do you have about your clients' cultural background; (8) Does the culture of the student influence how they interact or work with you; (9) Does the culture of the student effect how you work with them; (9) Describe to me a memorable story working with a culturally diverse student; (10) Do you have the competence to work effectively with culturally diverse students? Why or why not? (11) In your opinion, what are the critical components of being a cross culturally competent psychologist (Appendix C).

Question 1 was asked to ensure that I collected the needed biographical information. Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 were asked to gather information about the roles and functions the participants engage in as a psychologist, as well as the types of client issues they have worked with. Question 6 was asked to learn about the participants' cultural self-awareness, the first dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework. Question 7 was asked to gain information about the participants' knowledge of their clients' culture, the second dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework. Questions 8 and 9 were developed to explore Sue and Sue's (1990) third dimension, applying culturally appropriate skills and strategies. Two additional questions were asked to allow the participants the opportunity to describe memorable experiences with culturally diverse students and their perceived ability to work with culturally diverse individuals. The final question was developed in order to determine whether these participants could suggest additional cultural competency skills to those proposed by Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework.

Because the participants had very busy schedules, the interviews were conducted during a two-month period. Interviews were held in the participants' own home,

workplace, or an agreed upon public location (e.g., coffee shop). Each participant was interviewed once and a follow up phone call was made to determine if the participants wanted to add or change any information they provided during the interview. The interviews ranged in duration from one hour to almost two hours. The interviews were audio-taped. Audio-taping began after a general introduction of the study and an establishment of rapport.

The audiotapes were transcribed by myself after the interviews. At the end of the interview, participants were told that if they thought of anything they would like to add to the interview, they were encouraged to contact me by phone or email. One of the participants provided supplemental information by phone a day after the interview and that was included in the data analysis.

*Participant Selection*

Participants were selected because they have experience working with culturally diverse children and youth in the area of school psychology. Roper and Shapira (2000) stated, "You choose people to interview in a deliberate way to obtain data…[and] some individuals [are] better able to enlighten [the researcher] (p. 78-79). Although definitions of "race," "ethnicity," and "culture," and their degrees of overlap were problematic (Matsumoto, 2000), I chose to focus on the experiences of both Canadian-born counsellors of Western heritage and individuals of visible minority heritage. In the multicultural counselling literature, membership in a visible minority is seen as having a significant impact on identity formation. After several months of searching for psychologists who were willing to be a participant in this study, I was able to find only one individual of non Western heritage willing to be a participant in this study. The

sample is representative of the population of psychologists in Canada where approximately 85% of registered psychologists are of White, Euro-Canadian descent (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Given these considerations, participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990), using my own personal and professional contacts as a starting point.

*Selection Criteria*

In searching for participants, I looked for information-rich examples of psychologists who:

- Are registered as a practicing provisionally registered psychologist who has completed their 1600-hour supervised practice, or are a practicing registered psychologist with the College of Alberta Psychologists.
- Professional employment has or presently involves work with school-aged individuals (i.e., five to 18 years old) in the areas of psycho-educational assessment, and/or counselling, and/or consultation.
- Use English as their working language.

Initial contact was made by telephone; this was followed by an e-mail or regular mail of the Informed Consent form (Appendix B). Once the potential participant had time to review the information, I made a follow-up phone call or email to answer any questions and to schedule an appointment for the in-person interview. Personal history information was collected through screening interviews conducted before a participant's inclusion in the study; this served as background biographical information for the selected participants. Although the appropriate number of participants was not specified in advance, I initially contacted 19 individuals, 15 of who agreed to be in the study. With

each additional interview, new perspectives on psychologists' perceptions of their work with culturally diverse students did emerge but other issues began to repeat themselves as well. By stopping at 15 participants, I felt that there was both sufficient diversity and sufficient consensus on important themes. The fact that most of the participants were women of Euro-Canadian heritage reflects the predominance of women in the psychology profession (Fagan & Wise, 2000).

*Participant Characteristics*

Table 1 identifies the participants and provides relevant background information, including their educational backgrounds, the length of time as a registered psychologist or provisional psychologist, their current professional role as a psychologist, and their cultural background. Each of the participants is introduced individually in the following chapter. Because the community of psychologists who work in Edmonton schools is relatively small, I have not provided any other biographical information that might compromise the anonymity of the individual participants.

Table 1

*Participant Characteristics*

| Name | Educational background | Number of years as a psychologist | Type/area of work | Cultural background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barbara | PhD in Learning Development Assessment (LDA) | 3 | Contract | Euro Canadian |
| Nathan | MA in Counselling | 20 | Full time with school board | East Asian |
| Christopher | MA in Counselling | 20 | Private | Euro Canadian |
| Roxanne | PhD in Counselling | 30 | Private | Euro Canadian |
| Olga | MA in Special Ed, PhD Special Ed | 3 | Contract | Euro Canadian |
| Matthew | Teacher, MA Counselling | 6 | Private | Euro Canadian |
| Nicola | Teacher, MA Counselling | 2 | Full time with school board | Euro Canadian |
| Melissa | PhD School Psychology | 15 | Full time with school board | Euro Canadian |
| Stephanie | MA School Psychology | 5 | Full time with school board | Euro Canadian |
| Nicholas | PhD Counselling | 10 | Private | Euro Canadian |

| Name | Educational background | Number of years as a psychologist | Type/area of work | Cultural background |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alison | MA Clinical Psych. | 10 | Full time with school board | Euro Canadian |
| Rachel | PhD Counselling | 25 | Private | Euro Canadian |
| Alexis | MA Counselling | 2 | Full time with school board | Euro Canadian |
| Patrick | Teacher, PhD Counselling | 15 | Private | Euro Canadian |
| Olivia | Teacher, PhD LDA | 3 | Contract | Euro Canadian |

*Data Analysis*

Typological data analysis was used to capture the perspective of individuals regarding particular topics, namely Sue and Sue's (1990) three-dimensional framework of cross-cultural competence. The steps in typological analysis are outlined in Appendix D. The process by which typology analysis was applied in the present research, as outlined by Hatch (2002), will be discussed below.

Data analysis began with the division of the data set into categories based on predetermined typologies, which for this research were self-awareness of cultural background; knowledge of other's culture; and application of culturally appropriate skills and strategies. I read all the transcripts with one typology in mind, for example, participants' self awareness of their culture, and marked, by highlighting in a particular

color the data portions, where evidence relating to this topic was found. Although parts of the transcripts became separated, the whole data set was left intact as it was believed that data excerpts included elements that related to multiple typologies.

A comprehensive summary sheet was then created for each participant. As I read the data excerpts, I wrote a brief statement summarizing the main idea of the excerpt on the summary sheet. I made notes on the summary sheet of the place in the data that was being summarized so I was able to quickly refer back to the original data as the analysis continued.

To look for meaning within the data, I looked for emerging themes present in the data from the typology. As the research questions and guiding questions for interviews were based on Sue and Sue's (1990) framework of cross-cultural competence and Sue, Arrendondo & McDavis (1998) operationalizations of the framework, in this step of the analyses I was looking for certain kinds of data. For example, for the typology of cultural self-awareness, I looked for data relating to how participants described their background, their racial identity, and their values, attitudes, etc. During this stage, I read the summary statements and searched for my own anticipated results, based on Sue and Sue's (1990) framework, and at the same time watching for other data that may be unexpected. The product of this step was hypothetical patterns and themes (Hatch, 2002).

For the next step in typological analysis, guided by Hatch (2002), I went back to the marked protocols and read through all the data marked for inclusion in the typology under investigation and then coded each entry using the patterns and themes that were hypothesized in the previous step. For example, under the typology of cultural self-awareness I hypothesized four themes of how participants expressed their awareness of

their cultural identity: by focusing on their parents' ancestry, their White racial identity, the similarities and differences with other cultures, and their expressed limitations of their knowledge. I read all the data highlighted for this category and coded each entry using the patterns identified. For example, data excerpts that related to parent's ancestry were given a code of PA to distinguish it from other categories. At the same time, I made a simultaneous record of where elements related to the category were found in the data. When I coded the data, on a separate sheet, I also made a record of all the places in the data where I coded that category by noting the interview name and the page number of the transcript.

As the data were re-read and coded, it became evident that not all excerpts fit neatly into the categories. Having coded all that I could, I then had to make a judgment as to whether or not the categories were justified by the data. My judgment was based on how well or how strong the data that was coded fit into the categories I made, as well as deciding if the uncoded data contained insights that were different or contradictory to what I had proposed. I then did a systematic search and exploration for nonexamples of the patterns I had made. I re-read all of the data set, not just the highlighted portions, and purposefully asked: Is there anything in the data that contradicts my findings? Upon re-reading the transcripts repeatedly, I identified several segments of information that did not fit under Sue and Sue's (1990) three-dimensional framework. When reading the transcripts I noted these segments of information related to the participants' perceived challenges to being a culturally competent psychologist. For example, participants felt they did not receive the appropriate educational training on how to work with culturally diverse individuals. When those comments were found in the transcripts, they were coded

"LOE: lack of education." This process facilitated the clustering of data bits of this concept. Then I made a decision to code these data excerpts under the typology "challenges to being a culturally competent psychologist" because it was associated with situations that the participants felt hindered their ability to work effectively and sensitively with culturally diverse students (Hatch, 2002).

After the above procedures were completed, I then began to look for connections across what had been found. This process was aided by making a visual representation of the categories explored thus far (Miles & Huberman, 1994) so that relationships that existed between data could be seen. I developed boxes (or maps) of the four broad typologies: self-assessment, knowledge of other's cultural worldview, application of culturally appropriate skills and techniques, and challenges to cultural competence. The four charts were refined during the whole writing process to ensure that they represented as accurately as possible the information shared by the participants. The concepts that were closely related were clustered together under the appropriate headings.

For the next step in the data analysis, I constructed sentences generalizing the patterns I had found to ensure that what had been found could be communicated to others. In other words, I wrote a sentence that expressed the relationships found in the particular contexts under investigation and followed within and across categories. These sentences capture generalizations that pull the whole study together. I wrote specific generalizations for each category examined. For example, in the present study my generalizing sentence for cultural self-awareness was: "Psychologists expressions of their cultural self-awareness were concrete and evident and diverse. They focused on their

parent's ancestry, their white racial identity, how they differed from other cultures and what they didn't know about other cultures."

The last step of the typology model, as outlined by Hatch (2002), involved going back to the data and selecting powerful examples that could be used to make the generalizations come alive for the readers. In qualitative reports, it is usual to "include data excerpts that take readers inside the contexts and allows them to hear the voices of the participants" (p. 159). When I processed the data, I made a star next to a powerful quote both in the protocol and in my record of where data excerpts were located. Finding quotes that accurately and clearly convey my ideas also provided a final check on my data analysis: if I had difficulty finding quotations that made a compelling case for my generalization, then I went back to the analysis process to ensure that my findings were indeed supported by the data.

*Reflexivity: Researcher as Instrument*

In qualitative postpositivist research, the researcher is the research instrument (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990), and as such, he/she must engage in an authentic process of self-reflection to identify assumptions and biases derived from her/his own experience. Furthermore, the researcher must continually identify when and how his/her experience is shaping the process of inquiry. Nonetheless, the credibility of the researcher and the research can be affected by biases or changes in perspective during the course of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To establish the credibility of the present study, information on my experiences, training, and perspective will be revealed, including personal and professional information that may affect data collection, analysis, and/or interpretation.

My education has provided me with ample opportunities to learn about issues related to cultural minorities. I have taken many courses on cultural issues, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, inside and outside the field of education and psychology. It is through these courses that I became interested in cross-cultural issues, such as minority rights and discriminatory practices. My experiences conducting psycho-educational assessments on culturally diverse children have sparked a significant amount of thought regarding standardized testing and its appropriateness and effectiveness with culturally diverse children. When I became a school psychologist, I started to think about the benefits and drawbacks to standardized testing, and became deeply interested in the research done on school psychology and cross-cultural issues, the criticisms against and for testing culturally diverse students, and how school psychologists themselves perceive their cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills when working with culturally different students. After taking these courses and through personal experience, I began to question and doubt that the standardized assessment procedures and testing materials that are used in school psychology could be applied universally to all students with confidence about its reliability and validity and that our practices may not always be culturally effective or appropriate. Learning about various cultural worldviews allowed me to think about and clarify my own beliefs regarding my own work as a psychologist working with culturally-diverse children. These will be discussed below.

It is significant to mention that I am of White, middle-class, Euro-Canadian descent and I have not knowingly experienced any cultural discrimination or prejudice. My perspective on cross-cultural issues related to psychology and education comes from my knowledge of the literature and my own experience working as a school psychologist.

I therefore had to be open to listening to the participants as they described their knowledge, opinions, awareness and experiences—because they are the experts on their own experiences. I also had to be cautious about allowing my beliefs about culturally appropriate assessment and how psychologists should assess culturally diverse students to interfere with my data collection, analysis and interpretation. I had to be very open to the psychologists' reactions to working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds and not become visibly disturbed if they reported negative opinions about different cultures or obvious discriminatory or prejudicial remarks. I had to recognize that the participants have different experiences and opinions from my own and I could not allow my own beliefs about cultural issues to interfere with the study. By keeping an open mind and letting the psychologists tell their own stories, I attempted to remain as unbiased as possible during both the collection and analysis of the interviews.

This research was a qualitative inquiry into the experiences of strangers, people who have worked as a psychologist with culturally diverse children and youth, it examined how they perceived, reflected and expressed their cross-cultural competence. Because what I heard was based on my own experience, my analysis could have been based on me more than on the information the participants really wanted to transmit. Merriam (1998) reminds us that: (1) 'data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter, or a translator'; (2) that 'one can not observe or measure a phenomenon without changing it', (3) that numbers, equations, and words 'are all abstract, symbolic representations, but reality itself.' According to Smith (1993), "the understanding one has of the reasons and the motives of another cannot be understood apart from the

background knowledge or web of social meanings – what one might call theory – of the interpreter" (p. 185).

To be an effective researcher, I had to be aware my own historical situatedness and how this might affect my understanding. Furthermore, I had to be open to having my prejudices changed and expanded through the dialogues with my participants. I also had to be willing to acknowledge the inadequacies in my own pre-understanding and to welcome the transformation on my own prejudices.

In terms of my own general background, as a registered psychologist I have considerable experience in establishing rapport and listening empathetically to the stories of others with an open, non-judgmental attitude. As a psychologist, I have carried out a number of in-depth interviews with diverse individuals. These experiences helped me cultivate the ability to hear, synthesize, and reflect the experiences of others with some sensitivity and validity.

*Ways of Establishing Rigour*

In this section, I explain how rigour was achieved using various meanings by referring to credibility, fittingness, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

"Credibility" is associated with rigour when the researcher follows and reports as closely as possible the perspectives of participants. During the data collection, all the participants were asked the same overall questions with the intent of eliciting information regarding their work and experiences with culturally diverse students. It was important to remain consistent during and across interviews in order to develop a better understanding of the topic being studied. Rigour was also established during data collection, for

example by using the same interview questions, by personally conducting all of the interviews myself, and by proceeding in the same way with all the participants while asking them to elaborate on their answers and comments. At the end of the data analysis, one participant reviewed the transcripts and he/she agreed with the codes and themes that were developed and that they represented what they had said. Finally, peer examination was used to enhance internal validity – I asked colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerged. This process was completed by having two colleagues read through two transcribed interviews to determine if they agreed upon the placement of the quotes under the appropriate headings.

"Fittingness" refers to the ability to apply findings where they could be meaningful elsewhere. Rigour could also be met when a certain level of confirmation is met, for example when individuals (fellow psychologist colleagues) read part of the text and found they could relate to it and were able to give similar examples from their own lives. These examples helped support the significance of the themes identified in counselling psychology.

Many concepts identified in the study are found in the literature. Examples include, racial identity, working with culturally diverse families, non-verbal assessment instruments, cultural worldviews, and alternative assessment methods. In Chapter 6, I will compare and discuss the similarities of the study with the framework outlined by Sue and Sue (1990), and research conducted by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1998), and Rogers and Lopez (1998).

Dependability refers to the ability to reproduce similar findings, as those in the study, when testing was repeated under similar circumstances and conditions. I aimed to

increase dependability by creating an audit trail through the use of dated memos on transcripts and journal entries regarding decisions on aspects of method, such as sampling decisions and the development of lines of questioning/inquiry. Several drafts of the results were completed. These drafts, which demonstrated the various levels of development toward the final completed results, were kept in computerized dated files. Finally, with regards to reliability, the findings from this study were triangulated with the dimensions outlined by Sue and Sue (1990) and Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) and the findings from Rogers and Lopez (2002) identification of critical cross cultural competencies in school psychology.

*Ethical Considerations*

As several authors working with qualitative methods have discussed, ethical considerations are foremost throughout the research process; the method is founded on respect for the participants and their stories (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In addition, the study conforms to the requirements of the Ethical Review Board in the Department of Educational Psychology and the University of Alberta.

All the participants chose to disguise their identities by using a pseudonym. I also disguised biographical details in the interviews. In a few instances I modified details of an incident or anecdote to protect the confidentiality of former clients. The participants were informed in the screening interview and at the start of the interview that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

While the data was being used for analysis it was locked in a cabinet in my home. Access to data was restricted to my doctoral supervisor and me in the event he needed to consult the transcripts. Any identifying information regarding the participants was stored

separately from the interview data. For five years following the study the data will be held in locked storage.

# CHAPTER FOUR: INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Although all but one of the participants in the study were Euro-Canadian psychologists working in Edmonton, each participant is an individual, with his or her particular life history, personal experiences, professional training, and previous cross-cultural experiences. What each psychologist brought with him or her to work with cross-cultural students shaped and framed the experiences he/she had and/or has working with them, and how he/she interpreted them. In this chapter, each individual participant will be introduced by focusing on his/her education and his/her work experience, his/her previous cross-cultural exposure, the work he/she is presently doing with cross-cultural students, and how long he/she has been working with culturally diverse children and youth.

## *Barbara*

Barbara is a provisionally registered psychologist in Alberta who has completed the 1600-hour internship, but who has yet to take the required written and oral licensing examinations. In addition to working full time as a school psychologist, Barbara is in the final stages of completing a Doctorate Degree in Special Education. For the past two years, Barbara has done numerous psycho-educational assessments in various school settings in and around the city of Edmonton. Barbara's work is primarily through contracts with private individuals, firms, agencies and school boards. Barbara has worked in mainstream school settings, at inner city schools for youth at risk, and at schools in First Nations communities. For approximately two years Barbara has worked regularly at an inner city charter school, which is composed of Aboriginal children and youth, most of whom have been out of school for at least three months, and/or who had or have serious

behavioural problems. When talking about her work in this school, Barbara's face lit up, "Well I think it is my favourite place to work, I work with a lot of different children…and they just seem to need my help." Because Barbara's work consists primarily of individual contracts, her workday is constantly changing. For example, on some days, Barbara drives several hundred kilometres north to a First Nations community where she attempts to assess as many students as possible in one day. On other days, Barbara works at an inner city school where she will assess a student in the morning and another in the afternoon. The number of assessments Barbara conducts also fluctuates depending upon the time of the year.

*Nathan*

For the interview, Nathan invited me to his home on a weekend and offered me coffee and something to eat. Nathan appeared poised, mindful, and in a good humour. He paused with an air of detached thoughts before answering questions and inquired about the nature of my research and the rationale for the interview questions. Unlike all the other participants who are of White Euro-Canadian backgrounds, Nathan is of Chinese descent and was raised in Trinidad. Nathan has spent the majority of his adult life living in a large city in Western Canada. After completing a Master's degree, he moved to Edmonton and has spent over twenty years working as a psychologist conducting psycho-educational assessments with a large school board.

*Christopher*

I met Christopher at his shared downtown office in Edmonton during his lunch break. Christopher has completed a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Alberta and has

spent his twenty-year long career working in and around Edmonton. Presently, Christopher divides his work time between counselling and testing children, youth, and adults in his private office and doing contract work for schools. When asked about the cultural background of the children and youth he has worked with, Christopher replied, "Oh, everything, refugees from Africa, Latinos, Asians, South East Asia, and some First Nations people." Perhaps due to time constraints, the interview with Christopher was relatively short, lasting less than one hour.

*Roxanne*

In terms of the number of years since becoming a registered psychologist, Roxanne is the most experienced psychologist among the participants. Roxanne did a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master's and Doctorate degree in educational psychology specializing in counselling and school psychology. Roxanne began her career working as a psychologist in rural communities primarily with individuals of Aboriginal descent. Roxanne explained that due to the lack of mental health services available in these areas, her role consisted of "mentoring, training, supervising, and doing therapy as well for the members of the community." For approximately ten years, Roxanne travelled to these remote Aboriginal communities several times a month for several days to provide various psychological services to the community members. Roxanne felt it was important she spent several days working with the community to build rapport and trust with the people as opposed to the "one shot testing," as described by Roxanne,

> …it was ongoing, it wasn't just going in and doing assessments and walking away. I worked mostly with the younger grades so I worked with a lot of the

teachers which was very satisfying as opposed to parachuting in. I wouldn't find that very satisfying.

After a decade of working in remote rural communities and starting a family, Roxanne decided to continue providing various psychological services to different schools and agencies in the Edmonton area. For the past several years Roxanne's work has shifted to spending the majority of her time working as a university professor and a supervisor to graduate students and doing the occasional private psycho-educational assessment.

*Olga*

Olga was the only participant with a Bachelor's and Master's Degree outside the area of Education or Psychology. Although Olga's undergraduate level training focused mostly on the neurosciences, she did not enjoy working in a laboratory and instead preferred working with people. With the advice of friends, family, and colleagues, Olga decided she wanted to be a psychologist working with school age children and thus continued her graduate level education in the area of Special Education. Since becoming a provisionally registered psychologist three years ago, Olga had conducted hundreds of psycho-educational assessments and parent custody assessments for Child/Family Welfare. Currently, Olga is working for a private firm, which has contracts with several schools and agencies in and around the city of Edmonton. Olga's clients are primarily from a First Nations background. Olga also works in schools where "there are a lot of Philippine children and children from Portuguese descent and Italian descent. These schools are in fairly poor communities so they are like your working class where people work two jobs. The children may have born here but their parents were born in their home land." Regarding her own cultural background, Olga identified herself as being

Ukrainian, "We're Ukrainian. My grandfather was born in Ukraine and my parents grew up in a small town that was dominantly Ukrainian. So everyone there spoke Ukrainian. I don't. My parents didn't teach that to us."

*Matthew*

Matthew was one of the few participants who knew early on in his education that he wanted to be a psychologist. Soon after completing a Bachelor's degree, Matthew went on to receive a Masters degree and became a registered psychologist. For the past six years, Matthew has been a registered psychologist working primarily in private practice. Many of Matthew's clients are adolescents, who are referred to him by their parents or by Child Welfare. When asked to describe the cultural background of his clients, Matthew answered, "I see a mix of clients. Some are from French background, a lot of adolescents and children are from Aboriginal background, East Indian, and some other background. And the referrals range "from concerns about socialization in school, academic problems, a lot of behavioural issues, some of them are anxiety. And testing as well."

*Nicola*

Nicola began her career as a teacher, but after several years decided that, she wanted to be a school counsellor. After completing the one-year post-bachelor's degree that is required to become a school counsellor, a professor suggested that she become a registered psychologist as she had already fulfilled most of the requirements. After working several years as a school counsellor, Nicola then decided she "wanted more of a day job so I ended up in psychology." Having had extensive experience working with

"emotionally disturbed children" at several inner city schools for youth at risk, with children who were in "locked units," and "a lot of street kids," Nicola felt that becoming a psychologist was not a difficult transition. Approximately twelve years ago Nicola's work began to consist of mostly custody and divorce work. Today, she sees clients at her private firm including, "children with behaviour problems, boys acting out, girls with eating problems, women sorting out their stage in life, divorce and kids of and how they are dealing with it." When asked to describe the cultural background of the children and youth she has and/or does work with, Nicola responded:

> I did a lot of work with Vietnamese and that part of Asia. After working with one family other families just end up coming with the kids. Of course First Nations, a lot of people from South America the children that were adopted from South America , and China, and Korea and Romania. Those kinds of things were there is that interesting mix because they are adopted after they have lived in their culture usually after living in very unfortunate circumstances. And we are getting a lot of kids that are being adopted from the States that are like from a different culture because the inner city Black culture they are different from here again. And I wouldn't find that with the same Black kids born here, that inner city life there. And maybe it's because of the quality.

*Melissa*

Melissa is the only participant to have completed a graduate degree specifically in the area of school psychology. Melissa explained that where she was educated and trained, in a large city in the Canadian Maritimes, the work of a school psychologist is considerably different than it is in Edmonton. According to Melissa, where she was

trained, a school psychologist is hired to work exclusively for a certain number of schools (e.g., five) and he/she is responsible for all the school psychology related roles and functions at those schools, including counselling and testing. Since moving to Edmonton in the early 1990's, Melissa has worked in various positions, including working for a school board, in private practice and doing contract work in First Nations communities. Melissa described a typical workday as:

> …going into the school in the morning doing an assessment, at least one. If I do two that's pretty a busy day and if I do that then the next day is pretty much in the office and doing reports and doing phone calls and that sort of thing and getting back questionnaires. And going to the schools and getting things back. So it's a fair bit of running around.

Melissa's clients have come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including some who have recently immigrated to Canada from developing countries. As Melissa explains, some of these students face unique challenges; "The ones that I found a bit disconcerting were those from Sudan because that is a really different kind of thing all together. I'm much more concerned about them then those kids who are from cultural groups where families have been here in Canada for awhile."

Melissa was the only participant who had a career-long interest in working specifically with culturally diverse individuals. According to Melissa, when she began her career as a psychologist in Edmonton close to twenty years ago, many of her colleagues did not understand or were not aware of cultural influences on mental health. Melissa did however, recognize the significant impact cultural background can have on an individual and thus throughout her career has attempted to expand her cross-cultural

knowledge by attending training workshops and conferences and talking to experts in the area. At the end of the interview, Melissa expressed a keen interest in receiving a copy of this completed research.

*Stephanie*

I met Stephanie at her office in an Edmonton city high school where approximately 15 other psychologists share a confined workspace. Each psychologist in the office is assigned to work with a specific number of schools on the school board. Stephanie was the only participant to have had the same job since becoming a registered psychologist. When asked how she became a psychologist conducting psycho-educational assessments at the largest public school board in Edmonton, Stephanie replied simply, "I saw an ad in the newspaper looking for psychologists so I applied." She completed a degree in Education, and since starting her doctorate degree approximately eight years ago, she has lived and worked in Edmonton. When asked to describe a typical workday, Stephanie let out a sigh and laughed:

> If it is an assessment day I generally have three or four of those a week, then it's a visit to the schools, go and see the child, do a file review, talk to the teachers, do cognitive and/or behavioural assessment um two to three assessments a day, normally two . And then I do the reports a different day. I guess I do between, it ranges, but I would say on average six assessments a week. Sometimes more, during the crunch time you can't take time to write reports so you have to meet the deadlines. I try to give myself two days a week for report writing but that can't always happen. I try not to work on weekends but I chose to work at night.

Stephanie works with students from all grade levels and conducts various types of assessments including, "cognitive or behavioural assessments and sometimes I will have functional assessments like if they have a physical disability, coordination with the OT and trying to figure out how much support is needed in the classroom."

*Nicholas*

At six months of age Nicholas was adopted by man of Swedish descent, who had "blond hair and blue eyes, very hardcore Swedish," and a woman from an Ojibwa band in Ontario. Nicholas felt that having an Aboriginal background, attending a "high school was in the middle of four reserves and I would say the majority of students in my school were Aboriginal" and taking various university courses on Aboriginal issues helped prepare him for his work with First Nations children and youth as a psychologist. As Nicholas explained, "even this summer when I went up North to this town called (removed) right near the Artic ocean, it's really a great place, I still feel that the elements that helped me out the most are my mom's roots and my grandfathers roots and my great great grandfathers. In addition to his Scandinavian and Aboriginal background, growing up in a small rural town had a significant impact on Nicholas's worldview as an adult, as he stated, "I feel a large part of who I am is this small rural kind of guy… I lived in Edmonton since 92 and sometimes I still feel like I don't fit in the city. I would say I'm not really refined." After several years working in a hospital conducting assessments on older adults, Nicholas decided he wanted the opportunity to be in more control of his client's treatment plans and thus decided to work in private practice.

When asked to describe provide a typical work day Nicholas stated:

> In the morning I will check on their attention, concentration, problem solving, and in the afternoon it's more decision making, dexterity, impulse control, those types of things, then a lengthy interview, and here I work with assistants so the psych-assistant, then I will interview the parents or whoever else comes with them. And I find that it is interesting because toward the end of the day by the time I'm doing a pretty detailed couple of hours of interviewing I know much more where they are functioning and I know their deficits and I know the key issues on their social emotional. So they are here the whole day and in a few weeks they come back with their social worker and the parents and whoever and I go over the report if. It's the parents that are paying for the assessment then I give the parents a copy of the report or if it's a social worker or another agency that has contracted me then I will discuss the content of the report to the agency and the social worker can do what she wants of it.

The amount of time Nicholas spends with his clients varies considerably. For some cases, Nicholas's involvement with a client can last for one day, while for others his involvement can last for months. When asked if he works with the schools, he reported, "this year I am quite often on the phone with the schools in terms of special needs coding and trying to figure out what category the kids are in 42, 44 or 43 so yes, the consultation with the school is pretty important."

When asked to describe the cultural background of the children and youth he works with, Nicholas replied:

> Well Aboriginal culture is very common we are often dealing with youngsters from Aboriginal background so that is one category . Chinese background sort of

> Asian background from time-to-time, deaf, I view deaf culture as a separate entity in itself, um and some Inuit which I would have normally classified as the Aboriginal culture but after spending some time up there I think they are very different than Plains Aboriginal. So once again Asian, once in awhile some from Indian background, I don't know if I've had Pakistanian, some of Indo-Asian background, but I would have to say where I have worried about cultural impact on testing is Aboriginal background.

*Alison*

Having been born and raised in Quebec Alison described her background as French Canadian. Alison completed a Masters of Arts degree in Clinical Psychology in Ontario and moved to Edmonton soon afterwards. Alison spent many years working for Mental Health in and around the Edmonton area. Approximately one year ago, she decided she wanted to do something different and since then, she has been a psychologist for a school board in Edmonton. Alison is assigned to work with 12 schools in the Edmonton area, however not all of them request her services as they have the option to contract their own psychologists. As Alison explains, each school "gets an allocation of what they can spend and it's supposed to be spent on providing services but it is driven by the principal and inside management and they use the money they best see fit to serve their students." Alison explained that each school pays a certain service fee depending upon the type of assessment being requested. For example, a cognitive assessment, which consists of administering the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, is less time consuming and therefore less expensive, than a behaviour assessment which involves classroom observations and interviews with the students, their parents/guardians and

teachers. When asked if she has the opportunity to perform different roles and functions other than behaviour and cognitive assessments, Alison replied, "at the school board they have pretty defined roles and expectations for different parties. For the psychologists there that is primarily their role is to do psychoed assessment and consultations." Alison's workday appeared busy and time pressured, as she explained:

> When it's real busy a typical day looks like, there are three crunch times during the course of the year so as the deadlines approach and the referrals come in it looks I am frantically trying to get out to see all the students. So likely one to three students a day to try and do an assessment and then um then there is a report writing time which I will end up doing in the evening or weekends.

Normally, Alison will typically conduct a cognitive assessment in one day and less often will see a child with behavioural problems over a two-day period. As Alison explained:

> If it's a behavioural assessment, if I can get it all done one day, so it's the observation and the interview and whatever tests I might give them then it might be once but I try to get out a couple of times. If it's a behavioural I try to see them on two different days. But that is not always possible with the schedules we have.

As a psychologist working mostly within the downtown Edmonton area, Alison works with children and youth from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Aboriginal populations, Chinese and other Asian cultures.

*Rachel*

Rachel began her career working as a teacher who "eventually chose the challenge of special education. I found out I was counselling a lot of people so I took an introductory counselling course and I guess the rest of history." Since becoming a

psychologist, Rachel has worked from as far west as British Colombia to as far east as Newfoundland and internationally as well. Since the early 1980's, Rachel has been working in Alberta. Currently she is an "associate in the private practice and basically within (my) skills and talents will see clients as a psychologist."

Over her thirty-year career, Rachel has worked mostly with children at the elementary and junior level and less so with youth at the high school level. When inquired specifically about the cultural background of the children she has had experience working with, Rachel explained that when she was working in a Vancouver public school she taught an ESL class so most of her students were recent immigrants to Canada.

*Alexis*

Alexis is the only participant who works as a school counsellor. Similar to Rachel, Alexis began her career as a teacher, and then her work gradually transitioned to becoming the school counsellor as she explained, "um kids always talked to me so it just naturally progressed from there from teaching." After completing a Bachelor's and Master's degree in a large city in Central Canada, Alexis's career has been entirely in Alberta. In addition to being one of seven school counsellors at one of the largest high schools in Edmonton, Alexis teaches an introductory psychology class. I interviewed Alexis at the high school during the middle of a school day. Walking the halls of the high school with more than 2,000 students felt like walking through a large metropolitan city of multicultural adolescents. There were teenagers who were White, African Canadian, wearing Burkhas, turbans, with light skin and with dark skin and all shades in between. It was evident that Alexis's student clientele came from a wide range of cultural

backgrounds. When asked specifically about the cultural background of the students at this school, Alexis responded:

> Well, clearly if you walk the halls it is quite multicultural. So the nature of the clients that I have contact with quite honestly is probably female with their more self-help initiation um not very often will you see males in here unless they have been told to come here and then usually they are assigned to male counsellors. Not always. I can say if you multicultural issues um again White female generally speaking higher risk they will present themselves here . Um you won't generally see a lot of Asian kids walk through the door or part of the East Asian unless they are told to come here. So it's not self initiated very often.

*Patrick*

Similar to Rachel and Alexis, Patrick was first introduced to the field of school psychology while working as a teacher and "noticing lots of things going on with my students that I could observe but that I didn't have the training or the position to be helping with." When asked why he decided to continue his education and become a psychologist, Patrick simply relied, "Well it was the only way I could do my PhD and support my family at the same time and it also gave me a breadth of new activities to do and new experiences." After completing a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Education, Patrick continued to work part-time as a school counsellor. When Patrick became a licensed psychologist in the early 1990's he worked for a private firm while earning a Doctorate degree. Born and raised in Edmonton, Patrick has spent his entire career working in and around Edmonton. For the past seven years, he has worked for a private firm in downtown Edmonton with three other partners who provide various psychological

services to children, adolescents, and adults. In his fifteen years as a registered psychologist, Patrick has worked primarily with children and youth from a wide strata of the population: including adolescents who are homeless and live on the streets, children who are about to be removed from their families because of abuse and neglect, and children from a high socioeconomic status who are not meeting their parent's academic standards. As Patrick expressed:

> More recently I've had more private referrals where I have parents coming in and so typically they are more middle or upper class with their kids who are having emotional problems such as depression, self-mutilation or just out of control behaviour, drug abuse, or academic problems…I've uh worked with a lot of First Nations individuals I've done that for a long time. Uh I've got children of color who I work with that are in a biological family or more likely have been adopted or are foster children. In addition I've worked with Asian children which I find has a lot to do with school stress. There is really a culture clash between them and their parents in their views of education. And lots of majority mainstream kids as well from all socioeconomic status from very impoverished settings to uh disgustingly rich settings.

*Olivia*

The events that led Olivia to become a psychologist working in Edmonton and area schools are reminiscent of the stories of several other participants:

> Um I used to be a teacher and I decided to go back to school as I was interested some of my students had some pretty significant emotional, social and behavioural emotional problems not really planning on becoming a psychologist

> but as I became more and more involved in and other students I saw that as a good way to combine my teaching and my schooling so then I met a local psychologist and he offered to supervise me and that is how is sort of happened.

At the time of the interview, Olivia had not yet completed the written and oral examinations that are required before becoming a registered psychologist in Alberta. Having been a provisional psychologist for the past two years, she had accumulated many hours of experience relating to educational psychology. Olivia's typical workday consists essentially of two part-time positions:

> Well I sort of do a combination of two things: I will go and do assessments so then my typical day would consist of going and getting some referral information from the principal or teacher and meeting with the student, doing an assessment and then usually looking at their cumulative file and talking with their teacher after and so usually that day will involve two or three assessments and if on another day I work for its local schools then half of my day is usually spent working with groups or individual students on things like social skills or functional life skills learning strategies and the other half of the day is usually spent doing observations and consultations with the teachers or for an upcoming assessment.

Being a relatively new psychologist, Olivia relies heavily on the connections she had made during her university education, from her internship supervisor, and from her teaching experiences, to receive referrals for work. When asked about the cultural background of the students she has had and/or continues to work with, she explains that because she has two large contracts with schools on First Nations communities, most of

her students are Aboriginal. Olivia believes that the experiences she had while working as teacher in a First Nations community for several years has helped her feel comfortable, adequately prepared and well suited to work as a psychologist with this population. When asked if she ever felt unwelcome in a predominately Aboriginal community, Olivia replied:

> I never feel that way. I think it's because I worked on the reserve for so long. One of the reasons I went to teach there is to expand my horizon and see the world and meet different people and I think originally when I went to go work there people would come in and here is this young girl with long blond hair looks like 17 and people were probably like who is this and is she actually the teacher. But now I feel really comfortable in that setting because I learned a lot on how people are and I had a Cree speaking aid with me in the classroom all the time for 4 years so I picked up a lot of the language. And I went to a lot of the cultural activities. I went to dances and I went to powwows like I didn't have friends in this community so I think the naivety helped me because I really wanted to be there.

*Summary*

The participants' opening comments focused on the events that lead them to become psychologists working with culturally diverse children and youth as well as their present work. Although they had unique histories, many participants had common experiences. This interplay between unique and common experiences, opinions, and knowledge will be illustrated in the succeeding chapters. As described in the proceeding chapter, the cultural competence framework established by Sue and Sue (1990) served as the major theme from which all sub-themes emerged. Succeeding chapters present

detailed analysis of the participants' understanding and perceptions of their cross-cultural competence, including their knowledge of their own culture, knowledge of other cultures, and knowledge of skills and techniques used with culturally diverse children and youth. Furthermore, the open-ended and emergent nature of qualitative research means that data must be followed. From the open-ended questions, the participants' comments often expanded beyond the framework outlined by Sue and Sue (1990).

# CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the cross-cultural competence of psychologists working with culturally diverse students. By using a qualitative interview approach, I developed a list of questions that would allow the concept of cross-cultural competence, as outlined by Sue and Sue's (1990) framework, to be explored. In respect to the qualitative research process, psychologists who work/ed with culturally diverse students were recruited to be participants in this study. The intent was to discover if the participants would identify the dimensions set out by Sue and Sue (1990) and Rogers and Lopez (1990) as well as to learn of additional competencies as identified by the data. Once the data were analyzed and categories derived, it was possible to report on the participant's self-awareness, knowledge of others' culture, applications of culturally appropriate strategies, and the challenges they experience working with culturally diverse students.

Given the differences in life experiences of the psychologists interviewed and the work they conduct with culturally diverse students, the commonalities among the participants will now be explored. The next sections will offer descriptions and examples of the domains, categories, and subcategories identified in the data analysis.

## *Cross-Cultural Competence #1: Self-Awareness*

To elicit discussion about the participants' awareness of their own cultural background, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, traditions, and worldviews, the first dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework (1990), the following question was asked, "Describe to me your cultural background, including your roots, beliefs and values."

In their discussions of their work with culturally diverse children and youth, the participants' insights into their own knowledge of their own culture took several forms; some participants made references to the nationality of their ancestors; others discussed their racial identity and the potential influence this may have on their work with culturally diverse clients; some recognized differences and similarities between their own culture and the culture of their client; and other participants were aware of the limits of their competence and expertise working with culturally diverse individuals. The participants' diverse discussions of illustrating their self-awareness of their culture will be described below.

*Cultural histories and identity.* Reflecting the cultural mosaic makeup of Canada, when speaking about their cultural background, many participants identified several nationalities and ethnicities. To illustrate, having been adopted as an infant, Nicholas described his cultural roots as being composed of his birth parents and his adopted parents:

> I would have to say using my dad terms of a Heinz 57 background so here's the deal, I'm adopted so my biological roots are German and French. I don't know if my biological mom was French or German but I was adopted by the age of 6 months into a family where my father is Scandinavian, Swedish in origin, where he has blond hair and blue eyes, very hardcore Swedish and my mom is a member of an Qjibwa band in Ontario. So I would say she is a third or a half part or I'm not sure Scandinavian or Scotch. I don't know who I identify with.

For those participants who have ancestral roots tied to several different nationalities, singling out one cultural group with whom they related or identified with appeared

relatively difficult. For example, Melissa included her parents' ancestor's native country, the place where she was raised as a child, her parents' religious background, and her exposure (and lack of) to various cultural groups in her cultural identity:

> I'm from a large family. Both my parents were born in Canada. My dad is from a Hungarian background who was raised in a small town in Saskatchewan so and my mother was Jewish so there was that, she wasn't a practicing Jew, she was actually a practicing Catholic so a very mixed background and my mother's background is Scottish and Irish and from Manitoba. Where we grew up there was a lot of Métis people. We were around a lot of Métis, not other cultures like Blacks, Asian people. And I saw the impact so that's maybe how it made an impact on me.

Similarly, Rachel regarded her parent's ancestry and where she grew up as significantly influencing her cultural identity. Rachel also regarded where she has lived during her adulthood and her husband's nationality as being a part of her cultural identity :

> Well I've lived in Newfoundland, a culture in itself. My background is uh mainly Irish English and Norwegian on my father's side. I've lived for a time being in the United States when I was very young, my spouse is an English person and I've spent a considerable amount of time there so I guess I consider myself Canadian. And probably I'm as much a part of the multicultural group as anybody.

There were some participants who had difficulty describing their cultural background, and others who believed they did not have a cultural group, or could not think of a cultural group with whom they associated. Matthew regarded his parent's European ancestral roots as perhaps the only cultural group he identifies with, "My grandparents

from my dad's side are from England, besides that there is nothing that I really identify with. On my mom's side my grandfather came from Austria and Poland so some European influence there." Similarly, Stephanie believed she did not identify with a particular culture, other than being Canadian,

> I would say both my parents are Scottish but we are your typical white middle class family. My parents are born here in Canada from Nova Scotia. I guess I don't really identify with a particular culture, you know what I mean. Maybe Anglo Saxon, is that a culture, you know what I mean? "

*Racial identity.* In addition to identifying the nationality and ethnicity of their background, some participants spoke about their White racial identity. For example, Alexis acknowledged she is White and that she grew up in a community where she was not exposed to many different cultures,

> It was very unusual to have a Black student in the school or an Asian student or whatever - you could count them on one hand. So to be honest, pretty protective. So I was almost, as a younger person, almost afraid of different cultures so it was really interesting coming here. Not that I didn't feel one way or another I was fearful of the unknown. My world was very protective. Very White Anglo-Saxon.

Some participants expressed the sentiment that being White had a negative impact on their work and their ability to form positive healthy relationships with culturally different individuals. Distrust, resentment and sensitivity were sentiments expressed by three of the participants. Nicholas, for example, recognized that many culturally diverse parents may feel resentment towards him being a White male authoritative figure:

> I have no doubt in my mind say that some of the Aboriginal kids or adults too uh that they look at me as some White guy who does some testing with them and it's a very stressful process and for some there is some resentment as here is another White guy telling us what to do and how to run our families and sometimes we are just testing kids for us for not just behaviour issues, but sometimes they are taken from their families and then we have to assess not just the kids but their parents too . I think its' the culture of the authority figure…

Barbara, a psychologist who works in schools that are predominately composed of First Nations students, has felt that many students do not respect her because she is White:

> The problem that I seem to face is that my native* students don't seem to take me seriously because they think that I am some White, k, I'm going to say it some "bitch" that comes in you know what I mean? It is really hard to develop rapport so I am very sensitive about the fact that I am White. I think they take it a lot less seriously.

Olga also believed her racial identity has impeded her work with First Nations students. Olga recalled feeling unwelcome when she was conducting psycho-educational assessments on a Northern Edmonton First Nations community:

> Definitely in (removed name of place) for sure where definitely the children appeared suspicious of me. They were unfamiliar with authority from Euro-Canadian descent, I think there was a lot of distrust. Well even going into the schools walking in you know standing there hoping someone will help me, not

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* Throughout this document the term Aboriginal is used by the writer to refer to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit persons as this is the tern designated by the Canadian Federal Government. The term "Natives" was used only when directly quoting the participants.

> getting any assistance, getting stuck in a broom closet to do the assessment and then I said 'no' put me in the nurse's room, getting no assistance, people knocking, walking in and out, never being offered a cup of coffee, not that I need a cup of coffee, but I felt very unwelcome.

*Cultural connections*. Two participants recognized similarities between their own cultural background and the cultural background of their clients. Nicholas recognized a connection between his mother's Aboriginal worldview and the place where he was raised as a child with the background of his Aboriginal clients:

> It's been enough in the background of my family that I feel when I work on reserves with children from Aboriginal background I feel I can understand elements of what they have been through. I went to high school in (*removed*) and my school was in the middle of four reserves and I would say the majority of students in my school were Aboriginal and so issues surrounding Aboriginal I have some understanding of what it was like growing up in rural Saskatchewan like Plains, Cree cultures.

Nicola also pointed out commonalities she shared with her Aboriginal clients because of her small rural farming town background. These similarities in cultural backgrounds included the role of community in child rearing and how neighbours looked after each other:

> The other one that is interesting to me when I was doing work at a Native school youth center I really could identify with the kids who were brought up on reserves, the First Nations kids, from growing up on a farm. When they would describe and I mean it is dramatically different in so many ways but the concept

> of the group. I grew up in a very tight community looking back on it that was all Scandinavian and everybody looked out for each other, everybody cared for each other, and it's very similar to the Native reserve. You often had extended family around you. I lived in the next farm next to us and they would talk to us about wanting to go for long walks in the bush or doing things. And it was really interesting to me because two of them said they wanted to be with me because I looked like them which just cracked me up because they were dark but that was the only way they could describe that I would say "oh I remember that, I know that" and just having that connection it really seemed to bridge the cultural part. So I feel a big part of my culture is as part of a rural kid.

Later on in the interview Nicola also spoke of the resemblance between her beliefs in Christianity and some of the beliefs in Native spirituality:

> I also went to a very interesting lecture - in that in the traditional Lutheran culture from Scandinavia and the Native Spirituality and the Great Spirit in nature and environment the similarities are striking. And that was really big for me because when these people talk about their concept of religion and the Great Spirit and the creator and it always made sense to me and I never had put the two together. And I don't know why I thought a lot about that because Lutheranism came from the Catholic but it came from that independent strong nature and I think there is some connection. And the name of First Nation used to be very independent so there were so many similarities. So that was always very interesting to me in the similarities.

*Culture Clash*

In addition to recognizing commonalities between his own culture and his client's culture, Nicholas discussed events when he was made acutely aware of some of the differences that exist between the two cultures. To illustrate, Nicholas recalled a time when he was testing a Aboriginal boy and he behaved unlike any other child he had previously worked with. Nicholas felt that, had he not known that this child's behaviour was a normal behaviour in the child's culture he could well have misinterpreted this behaviour as abnormal and a possible symptom of a behavioural or emotional problem:

> During the testing they would often do this (makes a grimace facial expression) and I would think what does that mean and then they would work a bit more and do (makes expression). Gosh are they threatening me what's going on here? So I stepped out for a bit and I talked with one of the local nurses and I asked what does this mean (makes expression) when they do that Oh that means "no they don't know." Ah okay alright…So, it's interesting the gestures and styles that and um the nonverbal elements that can emerge. As a clinician if you miss some of that it can result in a totally off perspective on someone. The grimace was like the eyes squint a bit, the chin jumps out and the lips purse a bit. And I thought wow what is that? And it would come during the testing when I would ask a question and they would give this quick little response sort of gesture and I would ask the question again and pretty clearly you know I was missing the sign that this person didn't know what I was asking.

Later on during the interview, Nicholas recalled another time when the behaviours of his Aboriginal client were unlike the behaviour of any other client with which he had previously worked. Once again, although this child's behaviour could have been

interpreted as indicative of an attention disorder, this would have been an error in clinical judgement. As Nicholas explained:

> And we're in the middle of testing, working on the WISC and the one guy, we're in some medical centre looking at the ocean in the middle of the testing this one guy gets up and is making some gestures with his hands and is looking at the ocean and talking about camping and hunting and how in my mind I am thinking lets just finish this testing but for him it's perfectly natural to get up in and start talking about camping. On the one hand I could quickly interpret that as perhaps impulsiveness or yeah defiance but I don't think so. I think fine great we are doing an activity here but how about this how about talking about camping, like hunting and ice.

Stephanie described an example of when she became aware of cultural differences in the living conditions between what she was familiar with and her client's situation. Stephanie reported that her client was,

> ...sharing a bed with two of their siblings and their aunt and their uncle are there and the grandparents too and it's only a three bedroom house, you know, and those types of things where I would think oh my gosh and because those things are acceptable in their country of origin.

Although Stephanie's emotional reaction appeared judgmental, she was aware that the living conditions of her client could be normal in the country from which they immigrated.

*Self limitations.* Five participants were aware of and acknowledged their limitations in knowledge and skills when working with culturally diverse clients. As

Nicholas expressed, "It would take a lifetime to get to know all the intricacies of all the cultures." Alexis expressed a concern that no matter what knowledge she had about different cultures, being White prevented her from being able to completely empathize with her culturally different clients. As Alexis illustrates:

> I will never understand what it's like to be a Muslim or what it means to be Black you know. But I wouldn't go as far as saying that someone who isn't of the same race can't do an effective job of counselling them if you have that awareness, knowledge and background. But I think it's not even that it's for those immigrant children or those you aren't comfortable of who don't have anyone, but I think if they see a Muslim counsellor they are able to break through some of those barriers and be heard a certain way. To have a neutral setting can actually help. We really need more. They know that we really can't understand what they are going through.

Alexis also expressed a belief that culturally different children are, "not getting the help they need. Because I think there needs to be one black counsellor, one Muslim counsellor, one Asian culture."

For several participants, recognizing their limited knowledge about different cultures is a constructive process as it can help prevent them from making cultural assumptions about individuals. Olga believed that being uncomfortable and unfamiliar with a cultural group compels her to learn more about the client she is working with. For Olga, this entails doing research, learning about traditional activities and admitting that she does not "know it all:"

> The fact that I have a certain amount of fear and worry puts me in a good position to work with these kids and that I don't go in there assuming that I know who they are. And if I know I'm going to be working with a group who are recent immigrants or there is a culture that I'm not aware of I will do some research on their culture and their traditional practices. So I think having a certain amount degree of fear and humility and I can't pretend that I know enough and I don't think I ever will. There is just too much to know. And I know that I make mistakes but I clearly admit it and try to go back and try to fix it.

Similarly, Alison acknowledged that despite her broad knowledge base about specific cultural groups, she is still ignorant about many aspects of different cultures. Recognizing her limitations in competence, however, forces her to continue to seek consultation, seek further training or education, and refer to more qualified individuals or resources:

> But really for me the most important thing for me is to not assume anything about any specific individual from any culture and not to make assumptions about the person because they come from some culture. And you have to be willing to be uncomfortable and to look up stuff. I do look up some of the cultural stuff. For example knowing about smudging and kuma is grandmother and knowing some of that stuff and some of the language. I learned that through experience and talking with the children and if you use their language at times it can make them more at ease.

Matthew recalled when he first began working in a First Nations community and how his supervisor was pleased that Matthew admitted he did not know much about the Aboriginal culture:

> When I first got there the first day I was very professional. And my supervisor said to me, what do you know about Aboriginal culture? And I said, "To be honest with you not a lot." And she looked and me and said "good." She said "We'll train you." So I felt very welcomed. I loved working there.

*Summary*

When speaking about their cultural self-awareness, participants focused on their ancestry and family nationality. In addition, many participants were cognizant of their White racial identity and the ways in which their race may impede their ability to form trusting relationships with their clients. There were some participants who recognized commonalities and connections they shared between their culture and the culture of the students they worked with. A few participants talked about how their upbringing was similar to that of their clients, and others who recalled instances of when they encountered cultural behaviours with which they were unfamiliar.

Finally, some of the participants showed metacognitive awareness of their own cultural competence. They were able to talk about their limits in expertise and experience, and how being a White person did not allow them to fully break through some of the cultural barriers that they felt existed. However, several participants felt that a lack of knowledge compelled them to be open to learning more about other cultures. Once psychologists become aware of their own cultural background they are ready to learn about the cultural background of their clients – the second dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural framework.

*Cross-Cultural Competence #2: Knowledge of Others*

The second dimension of cross-cultural competence, as outlined by Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework (1990), focuses on the psychologists' knowledge of the worldview of the culturally different client without negative judgment. The participant interviews contain considerable material describing the knowledge they acquired in their training and work experiences regarding different cultures. This type of information speaks directly to the context of their work as psychologists and illustrates that they indeed acquired culture-specific knowledge. Although what they learned may not be unique to the culture groups they worked with, these psychologists did encounter situations, ideas, and cultural patterns that they had not experienced before in working with these culturally different children and youth.

Given that each participant deals with unique populations in different contexts, their expression of their knowledge of diverse cultures was distinctive. Participants described their knowledge of different cultures as being in three specific ways: knowledge of cultural views, beliefs on mental illness, and knowledge of cultural manifestations of behaviour. Finally, there were several participants who expressed reluctance in making any generalizing statements about the cultures of the children and youth they worked with for concern of stereotyping and over-generalizing. Instead, Sue and Sue's (1990) third dimension of the multicultural competence framework, as evidenced by the five examples, will be described below.

*Knowledge of cultural worldviews on mental illness.* Alexis, a counsellor who works in a multi-cultural high school, expressed knowledge of some of the challenges many Asian students at her school face. Alexis recognized that within the traditional

Asian culture, mental health problems are regarded as shameful to the family, which in turn will affect patterns of usage (or non-usage) of mental health services:

> You know from an Asian culture they are not going to necessarily, generally, they are not going to walk in here to get support. If I am going to speak to an Asian student it's because the teacher says they are very depressed or there are very quiet or they are lethargic. So I need to make the connection. They are very careful, they are very guided, very worried. They don't want their parents to necessarily know. Culturally there is no such thing as a mental illness. There is no such thing as having an emotional difficulty.

Alexis learned more about the Asian worldview of mental illness when she visited a Chinese student when she was in the hospital for severe mental health problems. Although visiting a person in the hospital is an acceptable and often respected practice in many Canadian-European cultures, Alexis learned that because many Asians fear shaming the family through disclosure of personal problems, Alexis's presence at the hospital was unwelcome. Alexis also spoke about the stresses some Muslim students experience with their parents' strong control over their lives. Alexis recognized that psychologists should respect their client's cultural worldview, but also believes that some cultural beliefs, values, traditions, etc., can interfere with aspects of traditional interventions and approaches:

> I don't think culturally they (Asian parents) thought there was a serious problem. They don't accept. Very ashamed. They almost hide when they have to talk about it. I made a mistake, here is a cultural mistake, by visiting the hospital where the child was and I think that made them very uncomfortable. But they are avoidant.

> They don't ever want to acknowledge that there was a problem. But you hear that a lot with the Asian people. With the Muslim families we gets lots of rebellion issues where the girls have to wear the Hijab okay so some of them don't want to and they fight and then culture is embarrassed and they want to control their kids, or lock them in the rooms or you know. So, you know you have to respect that culture. It gets really tricky because you want to help that child. That is the there is the whole battle. It is very difficult for us to work with that. There are these cultural rules and things can be very different.

Through her experiences working as a school counsellor Alexis has learned that many of her Chinese students place significant importance on educational success. Alexis felt that although some families of Asian descent may rebuff school professionals who attempt to discuss possible emotional or behavioural problems that their children may demonstrate, in order to work effectively with these students, it is important that psychologists work within the cultural boundaries. As Alexis explained:

> They don't want any of it to jeopardize the child's education. Everything is about education. And getting that 90 whatever percent, being the top…There was this one kid, she had 99 percent average and um this year the teachers were concerned because she was getting lethargic and stressed. Well if that is your standard and you can't be weak and you have to handle it and be on the student, you have to volunteer at the hospital. And there is no excuse. There is no such thing as mental illness. So it is definitely difficult for those kids and hard for us because you really don't want to change their value systems. You have to work within the boundaries.

Similarly, in her work with culturally diverse students Rachel has learned that East Indian families prefer to have their problems solved within their own families instead of seeking outside professional assistance. As Rachel explained, "I'll give you an example. An East Indian girl is sneaking out at night and getting into trouble so the father ships her off to BC to an aunt. So, sometimes it's the culture or the ethnic orientation says we solve our problems within our own group or with their own priest or minister or they go to their grandmother."

*Knowledge of cultural behaviours.* Throughout the interviews, several participants spoke about the behavioural manifestations of culture among culturally diverse students. Nicholas contended that in an attempt to protect themselves and their family from public view Asian students may suppress outward negative behaviours:

> So sometimes cultural issues will suppress behaviour problems. Some of the Asian cultures I think have a lower rate of behaviour problems early on and again not to stereotype but I think, I lived in Japan for awhile I think youngsters in some Asian cultures are clamped down pretty quickly. The difference is, especially in the Asian cultures the secrecy is tremendous. You do not talk about things in the public it's just family.

Patrick expressed a belief that, "Aboriginal cultures have a higher acting out rate" but also acknowledged that individual differences exist and Aboriginal children may be behaving inappropriately because they are having difficulty understanding the world around them. Likewise, Rachel felt that the Aboriginal culture has a wider range of acceptable behaviours and that, "it's a matter of just understanding where they come from so you don't mistake cultural behaviour for misbehaviour."

*Gathering knowledge*. Although many participants openly expressed their knowledge about different cultures using specific examples, many others were hesitant to group individuals by their culture or to make assumptions about their clients based on their cultural background. They commented that to do so might serve to simplify, and perhaps misguide any examination of the needs and concerns of the individuals in the group. These participants argued that each client should be treated as an individual regardless of his or her cultural background. As Patrick expressed:

> I mean you can't stereotype anybody I mean if you do you're going to be in trouble, you have to meet people as people. I think it's very dehumanizing to think you are Cree therefore you are like this because I think there is a huge difference from someone who is raised Cree in Northern Alberta to someone who is raised Cree in inner city Edmonton and someone who is raised Cree in the Riverbend. So to me it's not their obvious characteristics. So my role is to find out their perception of their culture and their cultural issues and again by talking with the parent .

Alison spoke of the importance for psychologists to identify within-group differences and the importance of assessing various aspects of individual clients in order to determine individual differences as well as cultural differences where, for example, distinctive characteristics of cultural groups that might fall under a broader category (e.g., Cree as a specific Aboriginal group) should be acknowledged. There are, for example, "differences between individuals who were raised in downtown Edmonton or on a First Nations Reservation in northern Alberta and between Cree Indians and Plains Indians." Alison also contended that treating all Aboriginal groups as the same can cause some potentially

serious errors in clinical judgment and treatment. Similarly, Stephanie warned against the potential negative outcomes of making assumptions about a child's behaviours based simply on the fact that he or she is Aboriginal:

> You might assume, for example, that say an Aboriginal child comes for an assessment and I make an assumption he is intimated to talk to adults or he is shy that's why he's not expressing himself but when it turns out that he has been adopted at birth and has Euro-Canadian parents and he doesn't have any of those ideals. So, it turns out he has some verbal language problems. So you have to be really careful making those assumptions.

When reflecting on her work with culturally different clients, Nicola was one of the few participants who did not believe that psychologists should work differently with a culturally diverse individual than they would with a client from the majority culture:

> …it's interesting that we've been told by different cultures it isn't what the emphasis is but rather how they are treated. And they are very sensitive to be respected if they see themselves being greeted in the same way that they would consider White middle class or whatever and they offered coffee or whatever that is really significant for them. So, it's interesting because they wanted to be treated the same.

Olivia told a story of when she was presenting the results from a psycho-educational assessment to Aboriginal parents, which highlights the potential negative outcomes that can arise when psychologists assume that all individuals from a particular culture should be treated the same way. Olivia's approach during the psycho-educational debrief meeting was straightforward, direct and focused on the critical need for the student to

receive psychiatric help. While some multiculturalists may have argued that this approach lacked cultural sensitivity, the student's parents appreciated her direct approach:

> I was in a meeting one time when a student who was showing significant symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia. There was a number of people at the interview including people from the community and the parents were actually Christian and not following traditional faith and they were there and the other people in the meeting were talking about sweats and the behaviours were severe and the student was struggling in a number of ways you know hallucinations and things like that and um I was really firm that if that is what they felt comfortable with that they should do cultural practices, but that they also needed to go to the (hospital). And I felt everyone was talking around the issue and I was pretty direct, and I was really clear on what I thought. And I really sort of thought that the parents might react negatively to it because everyone was talking around the issue and after that the parents refused to talk to anyone but me because they felt that people weren't being honest with them.

*Summary*

Sue and Sue's (1990) second dimension of the multicultural competence framework focuses on the psychologists' knowledge of the worldview of the culturally different client. As illustrated, the participants' interviews contain considerable material describing the knowledge they had acquired in their training and work experiences with different cultures. The participants expressed their knowledge of their client's cultural views and beliefs by providing examples of knowledge of cultural beliefs on mental illness, culturally acceptable behaviours, and knowledge of different cultural activities

and traditions. Finally, there were several participants, who warned against making generalizing statements or assumptions about the cultures of the children and youth they worked with for concern of stereotyping and making incorrect judgments.

According to Sue and Sue (1990), beyond being aware of one's own cultural background and having knowledge about their client's worldviews, culturally competent psychologists must integrate culturally appropriate practices, strategies, and skills in their practice. How participants demonstrated the third dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) multicultural competence framework is discussed below.

*Cross Cultural Competence #3: Skills and Techniques*

The third and final dimension, outlined by Sue and Sue (1990), deals with specific skills, strategies and techniques such as those utilized in assessment and intervention, that are needed when working with culturally different groups. The participants' interviews contain considerable material describing the skills, techniques, strategies, etc., they used in an attempt to make their work with culturally diverse students culturally appropriate and sensitive. Although what they described may not be unique to working with students with diverse cultural backgrounds, these psychologists described these skills with the intention of making their work more culturally appropriate and valid.

The use of culturally appropriate skills and techniques varied among the participants in this study. Participants reported that it was critical they develop rapport with the student, family, school, teachers, and community. Other participants modified or adapted psycho-educational assessment instruments to make them more culturally fair. Several participants ensured they reported the limitations of the assessment tools and procedure in their psycho-educational reports, ensuring that culturally diverse individuals

understand the findings of the report, and that they make recommendations for interventions that are culturally appropriate.

*Developing rapport.* Several participants noted how they developed rapport with their culturally diverse clients. Nicola felt, "You need to help them feel comfortable because if not then there is not much you can do with them." Similarly, Olivia felt it was essential that prior to testing the child she try to reduce his/her stress and anxiety by being relaxed and interacting with him or her in an informal setting, for example to, "go and get something to east and just hand out a bit more." Having been raised in a small farming town, Nicholas, who recalled some of the fears he had when he would come to the city, shares this story with his out-of-town clients to help reduce their anxiety:

> …I can remember the sights and sounds and the high levels of stimulation so I think that sometimes our testing, I know that sometimes coming into town they are so strung out and there are like "are we going to go to the mall?" and I have to get them to settle so I think that in some instances being able to talk about the big factors that the children face so I think I am able to help them and sometimes I don't know if our testing setting is pretty scary.

To help ease her culturally diverse client's stress and anxiety, Barbara spends more time developing rapport and being sensitive to her culturally diverse clients than she does with her White students:

> I guess the central preparation is I need to be very sensitive in terms of what I say and I really establish rapport with the kids. I think I do actually go about it differently than I would with a White school. I actually think that I pay more

> attention to them to tell you the truth now that I am thinking about it. Um I use humour a lot with all kids.

In addition to developing rapport with the students they are working with, several participants spoke about the significance of developing rapport with the student's family. Nathan, a school psychologist of Chinese descent, proposed that before doing an assessment all psychologists should, "interview the parents and find out what they want to know." Similarly, compared to when she works with a White student, Rachel spends more time with the parents of a culturally diverse student to determine their perceptions of their child's problems:

> Probably I will spend a little more time building rapport, talking to the parents and getting a sense of how they see it. Because I think it is really important for us to get a sense to get a picture from the parent and what they believe and what their perceptions are and what they think is happening and why and what will come out of it.

Similarly, when Alexis is working with a culturally diverse student, she involves the culturally diverse student's family earlier in the assessment process and focuses more on how she can help the student work toward a culturally admired goal, for example, academic success. Alexis also alters her communication style when working with culturally diverse families, for example, "If they come in here smelling of smoke I won't be all formal you know. I'm going to be a bit more. I may change it a bit. I may be more low key." To develop rapport with the family, prior to testing the student, Rachel ensures that the parents of her student understands the assessment process and what information it can and cannot provide, "and to talk to them until they are able to find value in what you

will be doing with their child." Although in the past Roxanne has felt resistance from the parent's of an Aboriginal client, she believes that when she became a mother she was able to relate to them on the common ground of parenthood:

> But then I had children and that helped out a lot which because then we had a common thread there and I found if I come in there as some arrogant psychologist but I was pretty down to earth and I took the time to get to know them and to learn that they were doing incredible work with these challenges.

For many contract psychologists the only time they are able to spend with the family is during the post-assessment debrief meeting when the results of the assessment are discussed. Olivia, a contract psychologist, felt this time should be used to make connections and develop rapport with the family by exchanging stories, being non-judgmental, using humour and sharing opinions and viewpoints. Olivia also makes a guided effort to spend time visiting the student's school to become acquainted and familiar with the people and the activities in which they participant. When asked what she would identify as a critical skill that a psychologist should possess, Olivia responded:

> Being open minded. Being non judgmental. Realizing that people love their kids and there is a very small minority who wants to do harm to their kids. People love their kids, they do the best with what they have. And they don't need someone coming in and telling them what they are doing wrong and you know a sense of humour and talking about what the student did. I always try to tell a story of something that happened during the assessment that is sort of funny or interesting. The ability to just visit. I really think you should take the time in the beginning of the meeting to just talk and share stories instead of sitting around and staring at

> each other and reading off a report. I think people skills, people can tell when you are judgmental and I think getting into conversations about why something is that way is totally futile. I think these meetings should always be a team discussion because I don't know what they have done in the past, I don't know what works, I don't know what does and also the referral source should also have input and say what they know has been useful. And knowing your population and trying out things, walking around the school, smiling, talking to people "oh it's really interesting what you are doing here today" spending time talking to people rather than just going to the room and back. I always ask about cultural activities in my interviews, like I will ask if they participate in the dancing or the drumming or anything like that because it's really high esteemed and it's important.

To help develop rapport with the student's family, Olivia also meets with them to thoroughly explain the results of the assessment and to discuss the recommendations. Olivia feels that providing the parents with a summary of the results may help them understand the technical language that is sometimes included in psycho-educational reports.

In addition to developing rapport with the students and their parents, one participant, who had spent several years working as a teacher, discussed the importance of developing rapport with the school and with the teachers. Olivia recognized that having worked as a teacher provides her with an understanding of some of the challenges they face:

> And I think coming from a teacher's background helps, saying I'm a teacher and I know how this is this is tough and here is some things that I've tried and more of

> can we work together on this attitude I think how you start your meetings will carry over .

To help develop rapport with the teachers and other school personnel and to gain an understanding of the school culture, Roxanne believed psychologists should spend time being in the schools outside of when they are administering tests. Roxanne felt that psychologists also need to provide information to the teachers that will be useful and that can be realistically applied in the classroom:

> I think they (psychologists) have to be really creative about creating an atmosphere, an environment. The temptation is to test as many kids as one can to make more money but it would make more sense to develop a rapport, a relationship. I always thought the one shot testing to not be very effective, and you have to think about being in the regular classroom and how does the teacher begin to fill in the gaps. To be realistic and meaningful otherwise it would be too frustrating for the teachers.

Many psychologists spoke about how forming relationships with local people from the community can help them learn more about their client's culture. Nicola appreciated the assistance she has received from the local people because they reminded her that despite all the differences, psychologists need to treat every person with respect.

> I've had the privilege to work with some really good native leaders who were really honest about it and I think what they will teach you is there are differences but they are just people like we are and we need to treat them with respect and have as much respect for their cultural differences as we should have for

> someone's religious differences. And I think to respect them for who they are. I think they assume that we don't get it.

Olivia developed rapport the community by learning some of the language and spending time with the locals in informal settings such as dances and powwows. Immersing herself in the Aboriginal community and recognizing their need for help played a critical role in Barbara's work with culturally diverse students. Similarly, by developing a relationship with the local people, Nicholas was able to use their first hand knowledge about culturally acceptable behaviours to gain insight into the child's functioning. As he explained, "I will rely on some of the local to give me some of the heads up…if I hadn't taken the time to ask some of the workers who knows what interpretation I may have had and what's scary too is who knows what areas I didn't tap into."

For Barbara, the close rapport she made with her students and their teachers is a key reason why she enjoys her work so much:

> It's just an experience unlike I have ever had. It just draws me there. It's the people, it's the way I feel when I am there, I feel like I'm immersed in this place where people really need my help. I am certainly welcomed as a staff member, that is one thing I do like, they are very welcoming, they know who I am.

*Modifying the assessment process.* Beyond developing rapport with the student, another skill that participants applied in their work with culturally diverse individuals related to the modifications and/or alterations they make when conducting a psycho-educational assessment. Participants spoke of five specific aspects of the assessment that they modify to make them more culturally appropriate: test instructions, test battery, test interpretation, report writing, and recommendations for interventions.

To begin with, Olga admitted that when she is administering a standardized test to a culturally\linguistically diverse student she has at times altered the test instructions to ensure that he/she understands what is expected of him or her:

> There may be slight modifications in test administration. Typically if I think that English is a second language or that verbal comprehension is not necessarily there I may modify the instructions until I think the child truly understands. So I just twiddle around with that. Like in "Similarities*" kids don't understand "alike."

Secondly, in their interpretation of the testing results, Nicholas and Patrick will focus more on the student's performance on nonverbal measures than his/her performance on those measures that are heavily language laden. As explained by Nicholas:

> For example I am pretty darn sure that the verbal IQ tests of WISC or WAIS wouldn't capture who is really is so in cultural so heavily culturally influenced settings I would have to say I rely much more strongly on the performance subtests even though the WISC is moving away from that I still think the visual subtests are likely a better means of tapping into what a person can do. If I look at cultural influences on testing is language is a mediator than can affect test results . The second component is the exposure of cultural knowledge. So with those two key components in mind I rely much more heavily on the performance IQ to really get a sense of language issues aside, um here is where I think this person is at.

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* Similarities is a subtest that is part of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Fourth Edition, in which the examinees state how two objects or concepts are similar.

Patrick also modified his assessment procedure by not including the verbal subtests for children for whom English is not their first language. As Patrick explained, "I have to modify the testing for example uh not using the verbal scales on the WISC and some performance measures and some other area strongly qualifying that English is his second language."

A third modification to the process involved in the psycho-educational assessment was raised by three participants, and that was the inclusion of nonverbal and more open-ended instruments in their typical battery. To bypass and perhaps limit the biases that are present in many testing instruments, Nicholas uses various neuropsychological tests (e.g., perceptual-motor, memory, sensory, executive functioning), which he believed, "overstep some elements of culture so as he "can get an accurate sample of who this client is."

Beyond utilizing the more commonly used measures of cognitive/intellectual functioning, Matthew uses nonverbal measures of cognitive ability such as the Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (TONI) or the Cognitive Assessment System (CAS), "so I have a thing that is not culturally bound." Furthermore, in Matthew's test battery he includes more open-ended assessment measures such as projective drawings as, "they are more culturally fair… I feel I get a lot more valuable information because it is something they like to do generally and um will talk to them more about their drawings then asking them head on questions."

A fourth strategy that some participants utilized to make their psycho-educational assessment more culturally appropriate was to ensure that in the assessment report they inform the reader(s) of the potential invalidity of the assessment results in the psycho-educational report due to possible linguistic and cultural influences. To enhance the

cultural sensitivity of their psycho-educational assessments, Stephanie and Barbara both ensure that they report the limitations and potential invalidity of their results in the psycho-educational assessment report, especially when describing the results from measures that are heavily dependent on language ability. Instead, Stephanie and Barbara demonstrated the ability to interpret assessment results in a way that recognizes the cultural and linguistic characteristics of their client:

> So it comes down to clinical judgement and usually I make a statement about it in the report if I think there was that issue. I will also compare the verbal and the nonverbal scores because the nonverbal shouldn't be affected by language so I usually do a comparison to see if there is a huge discrepancy.

When Barbara conducts a behavioural assessment and she believes the student's behaviour may be influenced by their cultural background, she ensures that in the report she states the possibility that her results may not be accurate and:

> ...it is just a point in time that is the child's functioning is at the moment and should not be used as a consistent indicator of their future behaviour. So I have to put in a little clause. And what I will do for coding* is I will not give the kid a diagnosis I will say this child is engaging in behaviours consistent with the symptoms of blah blah blah that are features of this disorder however they may be magnified by environmental circumstances.

Finally, in order to try to make the psycho-educational assessment process more culturally sensitive, Olivia ensures she provides parents/guardians and the school

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* When a student meets the criteria for special needs funding provided by Alberta Education he/she is assigned a number code, designating the type of disability he/she has. The amount of funding the student receives depends upon their assigned code.

personnel with recommendations that are culturally appropriate and that are available and accessible through the school and/or community:

> I will make recommendations for Elder counselling cause most schools will have it or I will make recommendations on how to start Elder counselling. Because you know that's how people get comfort. Typically around things like grief or abuse and kids really listen to them because you know they are held high esteemed in the community and they are someone in the community they can talk to. And I will make recommendations to get them involved in some cultural activities that whatever the school has. Most of the schools have a person who is in charge of cultural activities like tee pees or drumming or sweats. I think it's good to ask what the school can offer.

Similarly, Barbara recalled a time when she learned about a traditional Native healing practice from one of the teachers and how it may have a positive outcome for a student with severe behavioural difficulties:

> I also state that First Nations kids are often better with hands on tasks and they need like the auditory, visual, and tactile simulation. I also, this is really interesting that this is come up because in the younger schools they have a cultural healer. He's not actually trained per se but he is this drum teacher so he teaches how to make their own drums which they consider to be very healing. He actually sought me down and asked what I thought, if I thought for one of our real severe, severe behavioural problems to have him in this therapy. And I said absolutely, whatever we can do to help him culturally. And he sat me down and he said one of the biggest traumas that we go though is the loss of mom's

> heartbeat when we are born. So that is what the drum is supposed to replace. And I thought that was really cool.

Nicola felt that psychologists should learn what kind and how much assistance parents are able to provide to their children in order to ensure that the recommendations made are helpful and manageable for that family:

> You can't recommend that the parent read with the child every night cause the parents are illiterate half the time so you have to really look at the audience so when you are talking to the teachers asking them what can they do. Take a little bit of time to get to know the lay of the land.

*Summary*

Throughout the interviews, the participants talked about the importance of developing rapport with those involved in their work with culturally diverse students, including the student, his/her family, the student's teacher, the school, and the community. The participants described the skills needed to foster trusting relationships and to avoid their roles consisting of isolated standardized testing.

Although Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural competence framework outlines the critical components of a culturally competent psychologist and guided the research questions, throughout the interviews the participants expressed several opinions and beliefs about why it is challenging for them to work effectively and appropriately with culturally diverse individuals. In the succeeding chapter, five general areas that encompass the participants' views on the challenges to cultural competency will be discussed.

*Challenges as a Multicultural Psychologist*

Throughout the interviews the participants told stories about the difficulties they have experienced working with culturally diverse individuals. A major area of concern expressed by the participants focused on the limitations and biases that can be present in the psycho-educational assessment process. The participants raised concerns regarding the validity and reliability of the testing environment and the assessment of intellectual ability. Some participants felt that the traditional measures of cognitive ability are invalid and incomplete. Contrastingly, there were several participants who expressed a belief that standardized tests provide an estimate of academic potential in a Canadian school. Other areas of concern expressed by the participants were in the challenges associated with providing an accurate assessment of a culturally diverse student's behaviours; the resistance some participants felt when working with culturally diverse families, and the amount of time they are able to spend with their clients, especially for those participants who do contract work for schools. A final area of concern that emerged from the participants' discussions was in the frustrations they experienced regarding their lack of appropriate training and education on how to work effectively and appropriately with culturally diverse individuals. These areas of concern will be described in more detail below.

*Questioning assessment validity*. The participants discussed the several sources of biases that can be present in psycho-educational assessments on culturally diverse children and youth. Some participants argued that traditional standardized assessments do not allow for a valid measure of a student's functioning. Contrarily, other participants contended that even if aspects of the psycho-educational assessment are culturally unfair,

these measures provide an indication of how a student can be expected to perform in school. Those participants who questioned the validity of psycho-educational assessment raised four main biases: unfamiliar test environment, linguistic bias, content bias and unmeasured abilities.

*Test environment.* Several participants expressed concern in how assessments may be biased against students from diverse backgrounds because of the unfamiliarity with being formally tested. Nicholas, who often tests children from remote northern communities in his downtown Edmonton office, identified some of these concerns:

> So culturally how much does our office relate to what they have been through and for some it's not much of a step for others I just wonder sometimes how much accurate data we are getting here in terms of when kids come from out of town or they have an experience say you're an authority figure and that cultural impact and I don't know… But I have no doubt in my mind to be honest that for a lot of youngsters say Aboriginal kids they are coming here to and how similar is our testing environment to what they grew up with especially travelling up Northern Alberta or say in my life early on the reserves conditions can be different whether its poverty or violence or different family structures on the reserves. Culturally and geographically some of the questions don't really apply.

Similarly, Roxanne argued that because many culturally diverse children (e.g., First Nations children) do not speak English at home and are not exposed to many "White dominant" activities, they are at a disadvantage when they are administered traditional psycho-educational measures:

> Lack of exposure and lack of experience and lack of vocabulary…Maybe they need pictures of traps and hunting and fishing or some of kinds of activities or doing rural activities. It's not very cultural fair I guess. We can't give just the full scale IQ we need to talk about the discrepancies and to talk to the potential and we can't just compare it to the standard but also were they are coming from.

Through her experiences working in a First Nations community, Barbara has learned that the student's home environment is often vastly different from the school environment, that including the range of acceptable behaviours, rules, and routines. Barbara argued that because of this home-school culture contrast, many First Nations students are often not adequately prepared for the demands of the "regular traditional" classroom and as a result, they may behave inappropriately:

> I know that in a regular environment, at home, is much less structured. But it really seems like the difference between school and home in different cultures is that much greater. So we have they kids coming in, they can't sit, you actually have to train them, it's a whole different world for them so. In terms it's much easier to code them. But at the same time how valid is it?

Nicholas questioned if the conditions of strict adherence to test administration and scoring, a distraction free testing environment, examinee comprehension, and optimal effort by the individual that are needed to ensure test validity and reliability, can be met when testing culturally diverse children and youth:

> Testing can be very culturally laden in the sense that we expect strict administration of a test, optimum comprehension of instructions and optimum effort by the client and sustained level of interest the whole way through so to get

> an accurate sample of what a person can do well for him…So here we are in theory in testing theory in prestige and free from obstructions and people understand what we are saying and there are other times where I don't know where the testing environment is a little less sterile.

*Linguistic bias.* Another concern raised by many of the participants relating to assessment instruments was how many tests are heavily dependent on verbal ability and thus can be biased against children who are learning English as a second language (ESL). For this reason, Roxanne questioned even testing recent immigrants to Canada:

> Say if they were here in Canada just two months would you give them the WISC? I would give them some culture fair instrument as opposed that is too language loaded if they don't speak English very well or they don't understand that. I mean there are so many things there. You might even decide to not test at all. You know what is the need, what is the greater need for this child?

*Content bias.* Some participants asserted that many standardized tests are biased toward members of some cultural groups because they have not been as exposed to test content when compared to other cultural groups. Illustrating how some of the content in the Wechsler Adult Intellectual Scale (WAIS) is biased, Nicholas raised the following question:

> On the WAIS Information section one of the questions asks in which direction does the sun rise? And in that time of the year in the Artic it doesn't. My clients got the item wrong I think they said up or down. They gave an irrelevant answer. But I thought that that was really interesting. Gosh really up or down it's not

> necessarily that far off but way up in the Artic where the sun doesn't go down how does one deal with answers like that?

Barbara warned that traditional measures are designed for the dominant population and that it is not appropriate for individuals with different worldviews:

> I think it (the WISC) tests abilities that white middle class children have. Like I think for example, say processing speed it's a big problem because different cultural background just don't have that interest in time.

*Unmeasured abilities.* Several participants expressed opinions that traditional measures of intelligence do not adequately capture all aspects of a child's intellectual abilities and that only a narrow range of abilities are being assessed. Alison, for example, believes that traditional measures do not assess a child's creativity, "Is there something that would better get at you know what we want. Because a lot of these kids are very artistic which traditional measures don't capture at all." Olivia argued that these measures often fail to determine the abilities and strengths of a child with, for example, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome:

> I don't think that any of the tests give them the opportunity to really show what they are good at. For example, we are looking at a small what we call intelligent behaviour and there's lots of sometimes I think that kids with things like FAS that you know intelligence and achievement is not were they are going to be good at. What are they good at and what can we do to build on that and I don't think we really get at that. I think we know what they are bad at over and over and over.

*Estimates of academic success.* On the other side of the debate, several of the participants argued that although aspects of the traditional psycho-educational assessment

may be culturally biased, they are a measure of how well a student can be expected to perform in a Canadian school. As Isabelle explained, "The WISC is an estimate of school success within the Canadian context. It's a correlation with the ability to academic success." Nicholas argued that traditional measures provide valuable information on how we can expect a child to function in the dominant culture and it can provide valuable information as to where the student's strengths and weaknesses are:

> In classrooms where English is not the first language sure their verbal scores are going to be much lower but for us to totally ignore that is also problematic because if the youngsters want to function in the dominant language then what I've told parents is that maybe the score isn't that accurate but boy it shows you it really helps us figure out the troubles they may face when they leave the reserve get a job.

Barbara recalled instances when she worked with teachers who questioned the validity of the intellectual and academic measures. Barbara felt however, that the results provide useful information on how well the students can be expected to perform in a Canadian school:

> I've actually had teachers say to me how valid is this testing you know has been normed on Native children? So they are aware of it. Well I tell them actually is because I am aware of the fact that some of these tests really lacking culturally sensitivity so I actually say is what is going to happen with this testing and what we decide is we compare these scores to all these Canadian children their age so I tell the teachers is what I will be able to tell you is how well your student is going

> to do in a Canadian classroom compared to kids their age. Because that's honestly what I am telling them.

Nathan expressed a similar opinion, "Children may do poorly on the WISC but later they will do okay in life. In other words, the WISC may predict academic success but not later success in life." Furthermore, Alison debated if having different norms for different cultural groups would provide a more suitable comparison group.

> You know what I think would be really good and I talked about this with another psychologist last week is to have different norms for Aboriginal kids. I know there is whole political minefield to even think about that. Maybe you don't want to step on that for cognitive but maybe for behavioural, maybe you don't.

Alison also had conflicting views on the appropriateness of testing culturally diverse students. On the one hand, Alexis believed that testing recently immigrated students or students from a First Nations community may not accurately measure true intellectual ability. Contrarily, however, Alexis believed that these tests may provide an indication of how the student will perform in the dominant school system:

> Well, in terms of like English as a second language absolutely and when kids come from another country it's almost sometimes what are we measuring exactly because they come from such a different experience. And I mean I think for a lot of kids um from you know that come from reserve that is a very different experience that I think if you haven't lived there or worked their intensively you almost can't imagine what it is like for them. So I kind of wonder sometimes how valid is this test we are giving them. But when I look at it from a school board perspective, this is how we are trying to educate them in this model, how do they

> fit in this model and where are the gaps are in this model. So I can think it can be helpful but in terms of breaking it down to this is how smart they are I don't think that's at all valid, I don't think that's what we are assessing.

Similarly, although Stephanie included a non-language dependent test for students for whom English is their second language, she believes that traditional measures provide useful information on where the student is struggling academically, because "they can really highlight where they are having problems."

*Measuring culturally appropriate behaviours.* In addition to assessing students' cognitive and academic functioning, all of the participants have conducted behavioural assessments on culturally diverse students. Participants expressed concerns about their ability to conduct valid behavioural assessments on culturally diverse student when behaviour can be heavily influenced by the environment and cultural background. Alexis recalled a time when she worked with an immigrant student child who had experienced a considerably violent home-life in their country of origin and who was behaving aggressively toward his peers at school in Edmonton. Alexis struggled with her assessment of the student's behaviours as they were heavily influenced by his background, but were obviously not appropriate in school. When asked what happened Alexis explained:

> Well what happened is the child was coded behavioural. The mother was very very angry about it because she felt like this isn't helping her child. But unfortunately the child, is she is now a single mother who can hardly speak English she needed to interpreter to have the debriefing she was very very angry that the school wanted to put him in a behavioural site. She thought he was just

> having problems with the language and assimilation. It is difficult to determine how much of it assimilation so you know he has only been in school for 2 years. How much of this is cultural, how much of this is assimilation, how much of this is just a kid who has bad behaviours. And for me the bottom line is he has been here for two years and this behaviour is not acceptable in this culture so you know he needs to adapt to our culture or he will end up in prison.

Similarly, Alison recalled a time when she was working with a recently immigrated student whose behaviours were probably necessary for survival in his home county but by mainstream standards these behaviours could also be considered symptomatic of a behaviour disorder. As she explained:

> What I found really interesting given the kid's background it's completely understandable how he could end up this way. But the fact remains that he is lying and stealing and cheating and you know being physically aggressive to other kids, he's turning into a thug. And it's like well that might have been survival in India but here it is not okay so it's just this completely, culturally it is so different that what do with that?

Olga also has also been faced with the ethical, moral and practical dilemma of diagnosing a child's behaviour as abnormal and getting him/her the assistance and support he/she needs to function appropriately in school when his/ her behaviour is heavily influenced by the environment. As Olga explained:

> I try to be sensitive to that but the truth is if the child's behaviour is completely impaired I have to make the code. And that is one of the hard things about this

> work for behavioural is that they want a diagnosis of severe ODD and to me that is really setting up the kid because I believe it is largely environmental.

According to Nicholas, when assessing a culturally diverse student's behaviour it is not only critical that the psychologist determine if the student's behaviour is acceptable in his or her culture but rather to also consider its severity relative to the other students in the class.

In addition to considering the student's previous home-life and his/her behaviour relative to the other children in the class, Nicholas recognized that if language or communication difficulties are involved, behavioural problems can arise as a result:

> And one of the more interesting things I've seen with kids with genuine language problems have much higher rate of behavioural difficulties. Because they can't explain what is bothering them and they start to act out and "forget I don't want to listen to this" so they have a higher rate of zoning out in class….so the language problems are huge, the cultural influences is huge and the role that language issues is influenced behavioural problems is also huge I think they are all strongly connected.

*Parental/guardian involvement.* Several participants expressed concerns regarding working with the family of the culturally diverse students. Alison, for example, given how involved her family was in her education while she was growing up, had difficulty understanding why some families of the students she has worked with appeared to not be interested in their child's assessment:

> You know for me what I find difficult is my background my family is close and quite involved in their children's school. So when the family is not involved, or

> what I may perceive that they are not taking care of their kids properly that is really difficult for me that's the most difficult thing for me, when it's behavioural I interview the parents its more often than not a telephone interview. Cause that is what is most convenient. And you know that parents are available to return the call. You know it's tough to make a diagnosis when you haven't spoken to a parent. I know, I find that mind boggling. You have a psychologist assessing your child for a diagnosis and for whatever reason you can't contact them to participate in that, I just can't imagine that.

Olga expressed similar frustrations when she does not received any background information about the students she is working with, which ultimately makes it very difficult for her to determine if the student's behaviour is consistent across home and school settings:

> One of the major problems that I think I face is going up north to those sites and it is so hard because you don't have that background information and it's so hard to tell if it is situational. You don't know and parents are very reluctant to come in because they often think you are going to come in and kind of play games with them. In (removed) we had thirty assessments and half of the parents filled out the last minute to say "no way don't test." They didn't know what was going on.

Similarly, Barbara recognized that many culturally diverse parents do not fully understand the assessment process and as a result, without information on the student's home-life Barbara is unable to conduct a comprehensive assessment:

> They need a special liaison and they didn't have that. They need to know to why their child needs to be tested so we can provide them with the help they need. So

that is what bothers me. So, I am writing this report and I'm not saying anything about how things are at home and what is their history, I don't even know their developmental history. But I suppose you just to the best you can with what you have.

*Private vs. contract work.* The psychologists in this study who conduct psycho-educational assessment on students do so either as a private/contract psychologist or as a psychologist who is hired by a school board. A private psychologist receives referrals and payment directly from individual clients, such as the parent of the student, specific agencies such as Child Welfare, or from individual schools. A psychologist who is hired by a school board on the other hand, is usually assigned to work for a specific number of schools. Outlining these two types of professionals is significant as it appears that the assessment process (i.e., cost, time involved, quality of work) often varies considerably, depending on whether a student is seen by a private psychologist or by the school psychologist. A salient contrast between the private and school-based psychologist appears to be the amount of time the psychologist is able to spend with the student.

Patrick, a psychologist who works in private practice and does occasional contract work for schools, understands the difference between private and school psychologists. When asked to describe a typical workday, Patrick replied:

In doing an assessment when I am doing it privately it is different then with a school. When I do it privately I always start it with an hour long interview with the parents to really get the history of the child, find out what their concerns are, let them know what information I need from them and from the school, give them a behavioural checklist. Then depending upon the issue will depend upon the time

> I just finished one where I had the child in twice for a total of five hours. The first time I do the achievement test, visual motor and the interview. The second time I do the WISC and behavioural testing and personality assessment as well as finishing off the interview.

Nicholas is also a private psychologist and he explained that when he is conducting a psycho-educational assessment, he will spend several hours talking with his client's teachers and parents and doing observations of the student, in addition to the typical test battery. Due to this multi-informant approach, Nicholas is able to determine if and how the student's behaviour is similar across informants and across environments. Conducting observations of the student in the classroom also provides Nicholas with information on the antecedent conditions and consequences of the student's behaviour. Nicholas will "use a sort of triangulation of information from parents, information from teachers and information from our testing and look where the gaps may be from the different perspectives."

Contrary to private psychologists who are often able to spend several hours, perhaps days, administering tests, interviewing parents and teachers and conducting observations, psychologists who are paid for by the school board are limited in the amount of time they can work with any one student as they tend to have much larger case loads. For Alexis, a psychologist who works as the school counsellor for a large public high school, her job responsibilities include teaching a psychology class, tracking students with truancy problems, immediate problem solving with distressed students, conducting psycho-educational assessments, conferencing and meeting with parents,

teachers and other professionals, and developing individual program plans (IPP). As Alexis described:

> I don't do appointments so much you say like today is a typical day I taught psychology then I was tracking my kids with attendance and trying to get them back on track so I spent a lot of my morning tracking them and dealing with the kids who had crises yesterday. One of my kids left class so trying to find them to talk them to find out what happened and trying to resolve the issue or just listening. So that was most of the morning, then I met with a social worker to talk about another situation where another kid wants to leave home so I sent the social worker to talk with the family and see what happens with that. IPP stuff, going through the attendance records, reading psycho-educational reports.

Olga is responsible for conducting all the psycho-educational assessment for a specific school board. The amount of time she is able to spend conducting these assessments ranges from testing one to three students per day up to a maximum of four times per work. When describing her work in a Northern Alberta First Nations community, Olga stated:

> When I do psychoeducational assessments generally what I will do for younger children I will do classroom observation for about 20 minutes and maybe talk to the teacher aid in the class just so the child is familiar with me and then um take them into the room and do the assessment and try to do as many as I can and usually can get two or three of those done in a day.

According to the participants, psychologists who work for a large public school board conduct two types of assessments: a behavioural assessment, which includes classroom

observations; or a cognitive assessment, which involves administering a measure of intellectual ability. Therefore, the amount of time spent with the student and the type of test given depends upon the type of referral the psychologist receives, as explained by Alison:

> It depends which type of assessment so if it is a cognitive assessment pretty much it is once. If it's a behavioural assessment, if I can get it all done one day, so it's the observation and the interview and whatever tests I might give them then it might be once but I try to get out a couple of times. If it's a behavioural I try to see them on two different days. But that is not always possible with the schedules we have.

Psychologists, who work for private firms, on the other hand, appear to have more flexibility in choosing the tests they want to administer and the amount of time they are able to spend with their clients. Nicholas, for example, spends an entire day with one child and his/her family and will administer traditional tests such as the WISC, various executive functioning measures, and will conduct comprehensive interviews with the student and his or her guardians:

> …they are here for the whole today until 4:30. In the morning I will check on their attention, concentration, problem solving, and in the afternoon it's more decision making, dexterity, impulse control, those types of things, then a lengthy interview…I will interview the parents or whoever else comes with them and I find that it is interesting because toward the end of the day by the time I'm doing a pretty detailed couple of hours of interviewing I know much more where they

> are functioning and I know their deficits and I know the key issues on their social emotional. So they are here the whole day.

According to Allison, the public school system allocates a specific amount of money to each school to fund all their special needs services. The principal decides how much money the school will allocate to conducting psycho-educational assessments. As Alison explained, some of the schools that she is assigned to work with have never requested her services:

> Some schools use private psychologists and so some of the schools that are assigned to me don't send any referrals for the whole year. They get an allocation of what they can spend and it's supposed to be spent on providing services but it is driven by the principal inside management and they use the money they best see fit to serve their students.

Over the past 10 years, Nicholas has supervised several provisionally registered psychologists and has read many psycho-educational reports. According to Nicholas, when psychologists are forced to conduct too many assessments in too short of a time, often not enough information about the student is collected:

> I've also seen a lot of really interesting assessments where just not really the amount of data you hope was collected um was brought into bear for that youngster. So I would say yes, generally I think so and other times I think no culture issues were totally overlooked or um the amount of data that was collected was quite minimal. In some cases cultural issues weren't addressed at all where I felt there was a real big issue.

Similarly, Nicola argued that the time constraints placed on her does not allow her to consider outside or alternative influences such as the student's environment and cultural issues that may be impacting upon the student and his/her functioning in school, because "you are always twenty assessments behind or whatever."

*Education and training.* Another challenge to becoming a culturally competent psychologist that was voiced by many of the participants was the lack of appropriate education and training opportunities that they received on how to work effectively and sensitively with culturally diverse students and their families. According to Olivia, although she was taught the theory behind a culturally appropriate assessment, she did not receive any practical opportunities to learn how to work with culturally diverse individuals. As Olivia explained:

> We weren't really trained in multicultural counselling. There was no practical end of it - how do you speak to someone about depression or whatever the case may be so we didn't have the practical training but rather a superficial discussion on how you should look at client. You know it's so different…There is nothing that I got from the program that I think that would have helped me with my work on the reserve. But I definitely think there are things that can be taught in school like more people skills than how to give a test. I think the usefulness of the assessment will be based on how the psychologist gets along with the referral source, the approach that is taking when talking to the teachers about what they can do and what works and there is nothing that really addresses that.

Similarly, Alison felt that she was not adequately trained to work with culturally diverse students, "It seems that there is very little information and research available to us about

what happens when kids come from another country and how they fit and two years after they have been here how should it look?"

*Summary*

Throughout the interviews, the participants raised concerns and frustrations regarding their work with culturally diverse children and youth. Concerns related to the appropriateness of the testing environment, test validity, and unmeasured strengths in traditional assessment were discussed by many of the participants. Contrastingly, some participants believed that standardized psycho-educational assessments provide useful information on a culturally diverse student's ability to cope in a Canadian school. Other frustrations raised by the participants included the validity of assessing the behaviours of culturally diverse children and youth, especially without consideration of external and internal cultural influences. Some participants also felt that the students' parents did not appear to be interested in being involved in the psycho-educational process. Other challenges to becoming a culturally competent psychologist expressed by the participants were the amount time they were able to spend working with a particular student, the type of work they were able to do, and the lack of appropriate multicultural education and training. In the subsequent chapter, the main findings of this study will be discussed and situated with previous literature.

# CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

## *Overview*

With the changing face of Canadian demographics, it has become increasingly important for school psychologists to integrate cross-cultural competence into their practice with children and youth of diverse backgrounds. The interviews conducted within this study reveal themes consistent with how researchers have previously conceptualized, and operationalized cross-cultural competence. Furthermore, findings are somewhat convergent with those of Rogers and Lopez (2002), whose research represents the only other study found to explore this topic with school psychologists.

The focus of the current study was to establish how participants perceived their cross-cultural competence and to add to the literature in the area of school psychology and cross-cultural competence. Relative to the area of school psychology, cross-cultural competence has received extensive attention in the field of counselling. Over the past two decades, the tripartite model of multicultural counselling competence (Arredondo, et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992, Sue & Sue, 1990) has represented a vital conceptual framework to illustrate how counselling psychologists may best understand and work with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This framework helped to guide the current investigation, in terms of generating research questions and developing a plan for data analysis. Rogers and Lopez's (2002) review of the literature and questionnaire data from expert panellists offer a broad overview of what might be considered a list of critical cross-cultural skills that school psychologists should posses. Upon review of widespread lists of multicultural school psychology competencies, the following 14 general themes emerged, (from the "most critical" competence category to

the "least critical") assessment, report writing, laws and regulation (e.g., psychologists should have skill applying laws and regulations to protect against discrimination), working with interpreters, working with parents, theoretical paradigms (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the strengths and limitations of the major theoretical paradigms that operate in school psychology), counselling (e.g., psychologists have skill assessing acculturation of the client), professional characteristics (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the client's culture, values, worldview, etc.,), consultation, culture (e.g., the psychologist has knowledge about the interaction of culture and assessment), academic interventions, research methods (e.g., psychologists have knowledge about the need to consider socio-cultural variable variables and perspectives), working with organizations, and language.

In the next section, examples of the participants' self-awareness, knowledge of client's culture, their application of culturally appropriate skills and strategies, and the challenges associated with becoming/being a culturally competent psychologist will be discussed and compared with findings from previous related research.

*Self Awareness*

According to Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis's (1992) operationalization of Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural counselling competence model, cross-cultural competence includes awareness of personal attitudes and beliefs about their own culture; the need to verify their biases and stereotypes related to race, ethnicity and culture; and their awareness of their limitations of their knowledge and expertise. For some time, the assumption has been that the ability to work effectively with those who are different from

oneself is increased with greater awareness and understanding of one's own culture (Phinney & Tarver, 1989).

Psychologists in this study spoke to the complex nature of their cultural identities. They reflected on their ancestral roots, dominant race, religious affiliations, and familial and personal histories as key factors contributing to their identities. This finding is not surprising given Canada's ethnic and racial diversity (Fleras & Kunz, 2001; Elliott & Fleras, 1992). The participants in this study acknowledged the diversity of their cultural makeup: that they were not just of 'white' and 'black' descent, or of 'white' and something 'other'. They clarified in rich detail their multiple lines of ancestry. To illustrate, Nicholas described his cultural identity as being composed of four distinct ethnic roots. Melissa noted that her father has a Hungarian background and her grandmother was Jewish who practiced Catholicism and her mother has Scottish and Irish roots. Other participants felt they did not have a cultural group with which they identified. For example, Matthew noted that besides his grandparents coming from England, there was nothing else with which he identified. Similarly, Stephanie stated that although her parent's ancestors are from Scotland, she did not identify with a particular cultural group either. What the participants illustrated is that their cultural identity is more than the sum of their ethnic parts and that it is multifaceted. For Rachel, her refusal to renounce her Canadian identity in the place of a compartmentalized ethnic identity, illustrates the variety of her ethnic mixes, and emphasizes the salience of her experiences growing up in Canada. According to Berry's statuses of acculturation, these findings are not surprising given that a multicultural country like Canada allows bicultural individuals

to identify and participate in aspects of both their host and ethnic cultures to varying degrees (Berry et al., 2002).

*White privilege*. As stated by Parker, Moore, and Neimeyer (1998), one assumption in the literature is that White therapists can better understand others' racial attitudes and feelings when they are aware of and understand their own racial identity attitudes and development. Alexis, Nicholas, Barbara, and Olga possess an "intellectual understanding of racism" and how they (the Western culture) have perpetuated it. These findings are consistent with a previous qualitative study, which found that counselling psychologists reported that a major step to becoming multicultural competent was to be aware of oneself as a racial, cultural and ethnic being, and recognizing one's own privileged group statuses (Madonna et al., 2004). It is expected then that participant's increased awareness of their racial identity attitudes would be significantly associated with higher levels of self-reported cross-cultural competence (Constantine, Juby & Liang, 2001). This proposal would have to be investigated in a future research study.

*Cultural connections, culture clash.* Other than being able to identify the culture to which they belong to and from which they derive their fundamental cultural heritage, only two psychologists reflected on the connections between the cultural context from which their clients were reared and that of the psychologists themselves. Nicholas expressed an understanding and bond to Aboriginal cultures because of his mother's First Nations background, and Nicola identified how the role of the extended family in her own upbringing was similar to that of many First Nations communities.

Beyond identifying the connections between their own culture and that of their clients, many more participants recognized how their own culture differed from that of

their clients. According to Arrendondo et al., (1996), a culturally competent counsellor is able to articulate how their personal reactions and assumptions are different from those of the individuals with whom they work. In line with Arrendondo et al.'s, suggestion, Alexis and Rachel were aware that their worldview of mental health and what they regard as acceptable treatment methods often differed significantly from the parents of their Chinese clients.

*Self Limitations.* In line with Sue and Sue's (1990) model of cultural competence, the psychologists within this study discussed how their own limitations and sometimes restricted knowledge about a particular cultural group could have an influence on work with their clients. This self-awareness, rather than detracting from their ability to work effectively and sensitively with culturally diverse students, appears to foster and promote culturally appropriate practices. Matthew's recounting of a discussion with his supervisor perhaps illustrates this best. Before entering a First Nations community, Matthew was asked by his supervisor about his knowledge of First Nations persons. Somewhat to his surprise Matthew's supervisor appeared pleased, responding, "good – we'll teach you" when he responded honestly about his limited knowledge of First Nations people. This response likely reflects how preconceived notions might sometimes interfere with, rather than support, appropriate interactions with culturally diverse individuals. Like Matthew, Olga and Alexis recognized that despite their education and training there were always limits to their knowledge. For Olga, it was her "humility and ignorance" that she felt prevented her from assuming an unlimited knowledge about her client and that encouraged her to ask questions, seek consultation, and attend traditional activities. Likewise, for Alison, it was her acceptance of her lack of knowledge of cultural

particularities that spurred her to continue reflecting upon and testing her knowledge. These participants' reports are consistent with Constantine's et al., (2004) qualitative interview study, which found that counsellors reported that open-mindedness, being an active listener and the ability to be non-judgmental were personality characteristics that a culturally competent counsellor should posses. Somewhat divergent from these perspectives was that presented by Nicola, who commented that her own cultural identity, as a person within the majority culture, would always prevent her from truly understanding a client within a minority culture. Here, she points to the limits of education and training in preparing and aiding a psychologist in understanding the world of his or her client.

According to Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural competence model, in addition to being aware of one's own cultural background, the similarities and differences between their own culture and that of their clients, and their limits to their knowledge about different cultural groups, a culturally competent psychologist is also aware of his or her own assumptions about human behaviour, values, biases and preconceived notions. In this study, it was found that the participants' descriptions of their awareness of his or her own culture strongly convey the impression of obvious cultural influences. That is, the participants did not speak about the more subtle or latent aspects of their culture, such as their personal beliefs, values, assumptions, biases, and attitudes. Instead, they spoke about the more evident and apparent features of their cultural background. It is possible that this type of information was not obtained due the open-ended nature of the question that was asked (i.e., Describe to me your cultural background? What are your beliefs? What are your values?). Although this question may not have been specific enough to

elicit discussion of the participants' own prejudices and assumptions about their cultural background, the key characteristic of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspective and not the researcher's, thus leading questions were avoided. Alternatively, participants may have been reluctant to talk openly about their biases and prejudices to me for concern of being judged. It is also possible that the participants were unconscious of the extent to which their clinical decisions are explained and influenced by their values, beliefs and assumptions.

*Knowledge of Others*

*Beliefs, values and behaviours.* The second dimension of Sue and Sue's (1990) cross cultural competence framework suggests that a culturally competent counsellor respects their clients' worldview, including their religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values. In line with this, Alexis respected her Chinese student's family beliefs of mental health and their wish to keep problems within the family. Similarly, Rachel, Nicola and Alison demonstrated respect for their client's cultural worldview by respecting how their family sought help for their problems, and by including various indigenous practices in their assessment process. Included in this dimension in cultural competence is the ability to express an understanding of how culture may affect the manifestation of psychological difficulties (Arrendondo et al., 1996). In line with this competence, Patrick, Alison and Alexis recognized that Asians' suppression of negative behaviours as a response to an emotional or behavioural problem may lie in traditional Asian cultures conceptualization of mental illness.

According to Arrendondo et al., (1996) a culturally competent psychologist is able to express knowledge about a specific cultural groups' attitudes toward disabilities or

exceptionalities. This competence was reflected by Alexis, a school counsellor, who spoke about how for many Asian families their main concern about their child's emotional problems is that it will jeopardize their educational success. Similarly, Alexis noted that compared to the White students, the Asian students in her school were less likely to use mental health services. These findings are similar to Constantine et al's., (2004) research which found that counselling psychologists reported that cross-cultural competent counsellors have knowledge and awareness of the impact of cultural variables in people's lives.

*"Normal" behaviours.* Within the second dimension of the cross-cultural competence framework, it is outlined that a culturally competent psychologist is, "able to articulate (objectively) differences in nonverbal and verbal behaviours of the major cultural groups most frequently seen in their experiences of working with culturally diverse students" (Arredondo et al., 1996, p. 45). This skill was illustrated by Olga, Matthew, and Rachel who spoke of the lack of eye contact and use of nonverbal forms of communication among individuals of First Nations descent. This is consistent with research which has consistently found that First Nations people emphasize a non-verbal communication style, that moderation in speech, and avoidance of direct eye contact are nonverbal communications of respect by the listener, especially for respected elders and authority figures (Garrett & Herring, 2001).

Some of the participant's stories demonstrated that they "held an understanding of differences in child rearing practices due to cultural differences" another skill of a culturally competent practitioner outlined by Arrendondo et al. (1996, p.46). Rachel, for example, recalled a time when she noticed an Aboriginal mother communicating with her

child using primarily nonverbal cues. Similarly, Matthew recognized that within the First Nations community young girls often assume the role of mother at a much younger age than mainstream Western children do.

*Individual and within group differences.* Arrendondo et al., (1996) suggested, "a culturally competent counsellor is able to identify within-group differences and assess various aspects of individual clients to determine individual differences as well as cultural differences" (p. 10). Rachel and Patrick recognized that within the Aboriginal culture a vast diversity exists within cultural groups (e.g., Cree, Métis), including the languages spoken, the histories, beliefs, values, and customs. Furthermore, these participants acknowledged that within each cultural group individuals differ in their knowledge and use of their native language, their acceptance of their cultural heritage and practices of their culture, and their embracement of mainstream practices. Similarly, Stephanie expressed concerns about making quick assumptions about a person based on their ethnicity and Patrick believed it was critical that psychologists learn what the client's perspective of his/her culture is. These psychologists recognized that there is a very fine line between sensitivity to a client's membership in a particular group and losing sight of that person's individuality.

*Culturally Appropriate Strategies*

Several psychologists outlined various approaches, strategies and techniques they implemented to make their work with their culturally diverse people culturally sensitive. These strategies included developing rapport with their client, conducting culturally appropriate psycho-educational assessments, and making culturally relevant recommendations.

*Developing rapport.* According to Gibbs (1985) a certain degree of "cultural paranoia" is frequently expressed by culturally diverse clients in clinical encounters, who initially behave with suspicion and scepticism when they are introduced to their psychologist. Several participants spoke of this cultural paranoia: To help minimize their client's stress and anxiety Barbara spends time with the student in an informal setting; for example, by taking them out to get some food prior to an assessment. Nicholas tells the student stories of growing up in a small urban town that they may relate to, and Barbara uses humour with the students. Smith and Morissette (2001) note that trustworthiness is a critical factor when working with First Nations people and that this may be promoted by creating an informal and pleasant atmosphere.

By developing rapport with the student's family and community by attending cultural celebrations and activities, Olivia, Barbara, and Olga showed a respect for local networks – a competence outlined in the literature (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001). In their attempts to learn certain words from their client's culture, Matthew, Melissa, Nicholas, and Olivia showed they valued bilingualism and this helped them develop rapport with the community and the families of their students. Furthermore, these psychologists recognized the importance for them to establish working relationships with the community gatekeepers, natural-helpers, and power-brokers (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001).

In Rogers and Lopez's (2002) study on the Identification of Critical Cross-Cultural Competencies in School Psychology the "expert" school psychologists reported that it is essential that psychologists have knowledge about the family of the students they are working with, including knowledge about family structures, differences in authority,

communication patterns, belief systems, etc. The participants in this study, however, did not speak in much detail about the families of the students they worked with. Given the restricted contact with the family during the assessment process, it is understandable why they had limited knowledge regarding the family context.

*Culturally appropriate assessment.* Past research has suggested that the most critical cross-cultural competency in school psychology, as identified by the "expert" school psychologists in their study, related to the area of assessment (Rogers & Lopez, 2002). For example, "a cross-culturally skilled school psychologist should have knowledge about nonbiased assessment and the process of adapting available instruments" (p. 244). Similarity, according to Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), psychologists should "not be tied down to only one method or approach to helping and recognize the helping styles and approaches may be culture bound" (p. 483). In an attempt to work toward nonbiased assessment, several participants spoke about administering additional measures they believed may tap into other aspects of ability that are not assessed by typical components of the standard examinations. Nicholas and Patrick's reliance on the visual subtests for a more accurate assessment of what the student is capable of illustrates this skill. In line with the competence identified by Rogers and Lopez's (2002) research, in addition to traditional cognitive measures Nicholas and Matthew use "instruments sensitive to cultural and linguistic differences" (p. 129) such as the Comprehensive Tests of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI) and instruments designed to assess neuropsychological functioning. Consistent with Rogers and Lopez's identified competence, "psychologists should be knowledgeable about alternative assessment methods" (p. 129). Other participants used various non-standardized measures, such as

drawings and projective measures as part of their assessment battery. Some psychologists in this study also "adapted existing assessment tools when they deemed necessary" (Rogers & Lopez, 2002, p. 130), such as Olga who modified test instructions to ensure that the child understands the directions and Patrick who often "tested the limits" with his culturally diverse students.

*Reporting limitations, making recommendations.* Previous research in the area of cross-cultural competence and assessment has suggested that a culturally skilled school psychologist should "clearly and explicitly communicate the limitations of standardized test results in psychoeducational reports and that cultural bias may impact findings" (Rogers & Lopez, 2002, p. 245). The results of the current study also found that for example, for Barbara, it is critical that she include in her reports a statement or "clause" reporting that the tests used in the assessment may be culturally biased and the results are an estimate of a child's functioning at the present moment and should not be used as a consistent indicator of their future functioning.

Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis suggested that a culturally competent psychologist is "not averse to seek consultation with traditional healers and spiritual leaders and practitioners in the treatment of culturally different clients when appropriate" (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992, p.483). This recommendation is best illustrated by Olivia, who has made recommendations in her psycho-educational report that the student go to an Elder for counselling; Barbara, who recommended that the student see the drum teacher as he is a respected cultural healer in the First Nations Community; and Nicola, who involved a priest as part of the client's treatment plan.

*Challenges to Being a Culturally Competent Psychologist*

The majority of participants in this study referred to their challenges in working with culturally diverse students, although this was not a specific interview question. Analysis of the participants' interviews resulted in the identification of four specific challenges. These challenges included their concerns about: a) the validity and reliability of standardized testing of culturally diverse students, including the assessment of the student's behaviour; b) working with the families of culturally diverse students; c) the lack of appropriate education and training and government support; and d) their job expectations.

*The Debate: Assessment of culturally diverse students.* In school psychology, the cultural diversity literature has focused primarily on assessment practices particularly as it relates to assessment bias. This is likely due to the fact that the most visible diversity issue in school psychology has come about because of various court cases (Miranda & Gutter, 2002). The participants in this study gave ample descriptions of the limitations associated with standardized cognitive instruments, consistent with those outlined in the literature review. For example, the participants recognized that using measures not normed with the students they work with may compromise the validity of the test results and the assessment process and may lead to inappropriate and inaccurate interpretation of test scores and results (Arrendondo & Toperek, 2004). This is perhaps best illustrated by Barbara who explained to teachers working in the First Nations community that the results from a traditional psycho-educational assessment only suggest how a student performed compared to those children normed in the standardization sample, who are predominately white, middle class individuals. Other participants, such as Olivia,

criticized IQ tests claiming that they measure only a narrow range of abilities. In addition, as was raised by Barbara and consistent with concerns raised in the literature, qualities such as critical thinking skills, creativity, perseverance, and integrity are not measured on a standardized test (e.g., Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998). Finally, a finding previously reported and subsequently expressed by Nicholas, Ugla, Patrick, and William, was that standardized test instruments that are heavily dependent on the English Language will be biased against students who are learning English as their second language (Figuero & Gareia, 1994).

Concerns regarding the assessment of the behaviour(s) of culturally diverse students have been frequently raised in the literature (see Dana, 1992; Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic, 2000; Timimi, 2005). Determining if a student's behaviour is culturally normal or abnormal was a concern raised by many of the participants. During their discussions, Alexis, Matthew and Allison were able to situate a student's misbehaviour of aggression with that of his or her community expectations. These skills are consistent with Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic's proposal (2000) that the meaning of a child's misbehaviour will not be fully understood unless school psychologists know the context from which the behaviour is derived. Furthermore, Alexis recognized that assimilation difficulties may have a negative impact on a child's behaviour and Nicholas understood that expectations of appropriate behaviours at home may differ from what are deemed appropriate behaviours at school, a supported finding in the literature (Timimi, 2005). Nicholas also recognized that when a culturally diverse student is not proficient in English and has difficulty complying with requests in English, the student's behaviours may be interpreted as noncompliant, uncooperative or unwilling to participate and that

language difficulties may actually develop problem behaviours such as aggressive behaviours, withdrawn behaviours and truancy (Timimi, 2005). Similarly, as warned by Kalyanpur, Harry and Skrtic (2000), school psychologists need to be careful not to under-identify or over-identify a student's questionable behaviours because of difficulties interpreting their behaviour. Although these participants were demonstrating their understanding of the importance of viewing clinical information within a contextual perspective, they also recognized and struggled with the fact that the student's behaviours were not appropriate and were problematic in a school setting. The ethical and practical choice between recognizing and accepting that culture has a significant influence on a student's behaviour and feeling compelled to diagnose him or her with a behavioural disorder so he/she qualifies for the necessary funding needed for services appears to be a significant concern for psychologists working in Edmonton and is a topic that deserves future investigation.

*Family support.* Professionals' concern regarding their work with the family of culturally diverse students has been well documented in research (see Truscott & Truscott, 2005). With their recognition of parental illiteracy, lack of knowledge about school activities, and the limited time available to spend with their children, the participants showed they were aware of such factors. Although Olga and Alison expressed concerns that many of their client's parents did not appear to be interested in being a part of the assessment process, it has been suggested by Truscott and Truscott (2005) that the cultural and class differences between parents and teachers often result in cultural discontinuity or a possible mismatch.

*Education.* Another challenge discussed by the participants was the lack of available appropriate education and training opportunities on how to work effectively and sensitively with culturally diverse students and their families. Olivia believed that she was not adequately trained to work with different cultures and that she would have benefited more from practical training as opposed to simply discussing the theoretical components of culturally appropriate practices. This is consistent with research, which has suggested that psychologists often report that they did not receive the appropriate training to work effectively with culturally diverse individuals during their university training (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001). According to Sue and Sue (1999), single courses about cross-cultural counselling are inadequate and that the curriculum must be infused with cross-cultural content in order to be effective. Research suggests that many graduates feel unprepared for the realities of working with culturally diverse clients (see Arthur & Achenbach, 2002). This is critical as Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Frey Richardson, and Tiongson Corey (1998) have documented that self-reported cross-cultural skills, cross-cultural awareness, and cross-cultural knowledge all increased with cross-cultural training. Furthermore, according to Arthur and Achenbach (2002), experiential learning has been widely recommended as a training method that can bridge theory and practice. According to Arredondo and Arciniega (2001), although there is little agreement about the most effective strategies and approaches to teaching about cross-culturalism, the fact remains that educators must begin to implement competency-based teaching.

*Limitations and Delimitations*

A delimitation of this study is that the results are limited to the sample of 15 Edmonton based registered psychologists who conduct psychoeducational assessment of students from culturally diverse background and who volunteered to be in this research.

A limitation of this study is that the data was collected, analyzed and interpreted by one researcher. Although I attempted to account for my biases in the context of analyzing the data, it is likely that my perceptions uniquely influenced aspects of the investigation (e.g., the formation of the research questions), which may in turn have affected the data acquired. To this end, it is important that other researchers replicate and expand this investigation. From this extension, additional or different categories and domains could emerge, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural competence issues in school psychology.

Another short-coming of this research is that it is possible that the psychologists who did not agree to be in this study would have responded differently. Each participant in this study was a motivated volunteer who was able to verbally articulate his or her experiences during the interview. Qualitative research relies heavily on language as a vehicle for understanding and analysis. As a result, the participants used were chosen based on their ability to effectively communicate their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. In addition, the trustworthiness of the research depended heavily on my skill and ability in effectively communicating and capturing the key aspects of the participants' experiences through language.

All data was collected through self-report. As such, the results of this study are limited to what the research participants were willing to report and by their ability to

articulate their experiences. Other psychologists' experiences may differ from those in the study. These results are also based on what the psychologists recalled of events, and thus may be subjected to memory loses and distortion. Because of the sensitivity surrounding issues relating to the assessment of culturally diverse individuals, it is also possible that the participants responded in a socially desirable manner. Furthermore, it is possible that the psychologists were not comfortable in answering questions in which racial content is a part of the focus. Finally, it should be noted that using self-report measures raises the possibility that participants may assess anticipated rather than actual behaviours or attitudes. In other words, a school psychologist's perception of cross-cultural competency may not reflect actual competence.

A final limitation of this research related to the type of data analysis that was used. The potential weakness of typology analysis is that applying predetermined categories may blind the researcher to other important dimensions in the data. I agree with Hatch (2002) that all data analyses should involve both deductive and inductive thinking. Although I began the analysis with a deductive step (i.e., looking for data excepts that related to Sue and Sue's (1990) framework of cross-cultural competence), this did not preclude me from being aware that other important categories were likely to be in the data nor did it prevent me from looking for them. Unexpected themes did jump out of the data as I read and re-read the transcripts and when I was searching for disconfirming evidence.

The limitations notwithstanding, this study provides salient information about the area of cross-cultural school psychology. Obtaining the perspectives of school psychologists who work with culturally diverse clients seems vital to the ongoing

development of this speciality area. This valuable information has several research, training and practical implications.

*Recommendations for Practice and Future Study*

What practical implications do these findings have for professional psychologists? A review of both the APA and the NASP training standards yields little explicit information about the characteristics of the culturally competent school psychologist. Without a clearer understanding of the cross-cultural competencies that school psychologists should have, trainers will be limited in their ability to design relevant and appropriate curricular and training experiences. The present study enables trainers to have an explicit understanding of specific cross-cultural competencies that school psychologists themselves identify as most relevant to the delivery of school psychological services. Trainers can use the results from this study to prioritize the knowledge and skills competences that they feel are most important and then develop training modules and sequence training experiences that allow for the development of both kinds of expertise. As one example, in the present study several participants spoke about the necessary competencies needed when working with culturally diverse families and community members, which may need to be addressed in the curriculum of school psychology programs. Following learning from training modules about working with culturally diverse families, a practicum to develop applied skills in working with culturally diverse families and community members could be designed to focus on learning to seek out community members, establish rapport, interviewing parents, and presenting results to parents. Using the competencies identified by the participants in this study is likely to

enhance the quality of educational and psychological services to children who come from diverse backgrounds.

The results from this study also suggest that the techniques employed in cultural competence training must go far beyond lecture or panel presentation. At present, cultural issues tend to still be largely treated as an academic "unit" rather than as the context within which all interaction takes place (Hertzsprung & Dobson, 2000). As was raised by several participants, single training sessions without follow up will be less effective than ongoing discussion and development groups where group members come to trust each other enough to truly discover differences and explore similarities (Hertzsprung & Dobson, 2000). For example, participants in the study did not discuss how their cultural beliefs, assumptions, or values affected their work with culturally diverse individuals. Courses should therefore foster psychologists to explore their own culture to help them acknowledge how culture has shaped who they are and how they react to the world around them. Discussions in diverse groups can also enrich trainees' knowledge and understanding of variations in traditions, beliefs, behaviours, and worldview (Hertzsprung & Dobson, 2000). Furthermore, the findings from this study recommend that educators and experts in the area of cross-cultural competence continue to provide learning opportunities for school psychologists by offering workshops, seminars, courses, and presentations where active learning can take place. Nonetheless, it is important to note that ethically all psychologists have the dual responsibility of providing informed and relevant psychological services to all those with whom they work, and understanding the limits of their own competence. Psychologists need to recognize that many cross-cultural competencies require extra-session effort and activity. Psychologists need to

include time in their workday to obtain culture-specific consultations, read the relevant literature, develop a referral network of competent clinicians and translators, and learn about indigenous resources.

The findings from this study also provide an insight into an estimate of the gap between the recommendations found in the multicultural literature and professional psychologists' actual practices. Examples of cultural competencies outlined in the literature that were not noted by participants included (although not limited to): the ability to identify and recognize their specific attitudes, beliefs and values from their own cultural heritage and how this may interfere with providing the best service to their clients; the ability to recognize their sources of discomfort with differences that exist and their potential biases and preconceived notions; and knowledge about family structures, hierarchies, values and beliefs. Furthermore, although not specifically asked, most participants expressed significant concern regarding the amount of time they are able to spend on each psycho-educational assessment. This provides compelling evidence that educators and professionals need to creatively design graduate and continuing education that meets the specific needs of psychologists working with culturally diverse individuals in Edmonton, Alberta: which, in turn, may enable psychologists to work toward more culturally competent service delivery.

An interesting extension to this research would involve a smaller number of more intensive case studies with in depth interviews and detailed follow up throughout the interpretation process. While interpreting the participants' interviews, I often came upon comments that I wished I had probed more deeply. More detailed examples of assessments and interventions with specific clients and actual naturalistic observations of

specific cross-cultural competency domains of the psychologists working with a culturally diverse student would have also provided valuable and interesting information.

A useful extension of this research would be to look at the experience of psychologists who have worked with culturally diverse clients outside of Edmonton, for example, in large metropolitan cities with high immigrant populations. While making comparisons between psychologists from different locations, cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver would make such a sample feasible.

Future studies should employ other methods to identify cross-cultural school psychology competencies as a way of establishing the concurrent validity of the present results. It would be interesting to determine if there exists some degree of variability in future attempts to define and operationalize cross-cultural school psychology competencies as has been done in the field of counselling psychology.

With respect to the notion of maturation, participants in our sample ranged in the years of experience working as a psychologist. More research is needed to determine if one's cross-cultural experiences increase with time if one is open to and intentionally engages in obtaining valuable cross-cultural experiences. As psychologists continue to develop as professionals, it can be expected there will be a positive association between years in the profession and cross-cultural competency. Certainly, this is an area warranting further study.

Finally, although this study was not designed to assess the perceptions of those who receive services delivered by school psychologists, an important addition to the literature would be an investigation of what cross-cultural competencies that diverse clients (e.g., children, youth, parents, teachers, administrators) consider to be important to

the effective delivery of psychological services to the schools. Not only is it important for us to understand how psychologists define and articulate cross-cultural school psychology competencies; but, it is also critical that we understand what skills and behaviours culturally diverse clients find acceptable and relevant.

*Conclusion*

Within the education context, school psychologists, together with teachers and other mental health professionals, can help meet the needs of minority children and their families by continuing to develop a broader knowledge base, effective skills, and cultural sensitivity (Cole & Siegel, 2003, p. 236). Due to the increasing presence of a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse student population in Canadian school systems (Statistics Canada, 2002), many psychologists working with students are positioned to contribute to the positive academic and psychosocial experiences of culturally diverse individuals. Sue and Sue's (1990) cross-cultural competence model provides a framework for psychologists to become more responsive to the diverse needs of students of culturally diverse backgrounds in individual and group counselling, assessment, and consultation. It seems clear that psychologists' cultural self-awareness, their personal knowledge of their cultural diverse student's worldview, and skills for culturally responsive assessment and intervention skills will have a profound impact on students' educational, vocational and psychological adjustment and well-being. Although we as school psychologists can continue to look to other disciplines such as Counselling Psychology to supplement our knowledge base in the area of cross cultural competence, developing a school psychology literature base in this area will only move the field forward in its commitment to cross-cultural issues.

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## Appendix A: Information Letter to Psychologists

Dear Psychologist,

My name is Trista Knoetzke and I am a Doctoral student in school psychology at the University of Alberta. As part of my Ph.D program requirements, I am conducting a research project, under the supervision of Dr. Henry Janzen, to explore psychologists work with culturally diverse children. I received your name from _____ as he/she thought you may be willing to assist me by being a participant in my doctoral dissertation research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are or have worked with students from culturally diverse backgrounds in the area of psycho-educational assessment and/or consultation.

The purpose of this study is to gain information on how school psychologists understand and perceive their cross-cultural competence when working with culturally different students. Specifically, I was to ask you open-ended questions about your perceptions, beliefs, and understandings of your cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills and how you feel this impacts your work with culturally different children and youth as a psychologists working in the educational setting.

If you agree to participate in this study, your involvement would entail one or two interviews with myself. Meetings would last approximately one and a half hours and would be arranged and a convenient time for both you and the researcher. Please contact me at your earliest convenience at (780) 439-3861 or email: knoetzke@ualberta.ca to inform me of whether or not you would be willing to participate in this research and/or if you have any questions or concerns. Also, if you are willing to be a participant please provide me with the dates and times you would be available for an interview. Your participation in this research would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this project.

Trista Knoetzke

## Appendix B: Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Dear

I am a PhD student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta. As part of my degree, I am conducting a research study on school psychologists' understandings and perceptions of their cross-cultural competence. You were selected as a possible participant because you are currently working with students from culturally diverse backgrounds in the area of psychoeducational assessment and/or consultation. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be a participant in the study. Any questions or concerns you may have can be directed to myself, Trista Knoetzke at (780) 439-3861 (email: knoetzke@ualberta.ca) or Dr. Henry Janzen at (780) 492-5718.

The purpose of this study is to gain information on how school psychologists understand and perceive their cross-cultural competence when working with culturally different students. Specifically, I was to ask you open-ended questions about your perceptions, beliefs, and understandings of your cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and skills and how you feel this impacts your present work with culturally different children and youth as a psychologists working in the school setting.

If you agree to participate in this study, your involvement would entail one interview with myself. The meeting would last approximately one and a half hours and would be arranged and a convenient time for both you and the researcher. During the time of the interview, you will be asked to reflect on your experiences working with culturally diverse students and to share your feelings about your cross-cultural competence. The interviewer (myself) will note your answers on paper, and with your permission, audio record the interview so that I can listen to it again at a later time.

No names will appear in the interviewer's notes, and because the interviewer will respect your privacy and the confidentiality of your interview responses, there is little risk in your participation. This study will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

The records of this study will be kept private and anonymous. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a school or an individual participant. Research records will be kept in locked files for a minimum of five years; only myself will have access to the records. Information from your interview will not be shared with other psychologists, teachers, students or employers. If you request, a copy of the report will be provided to you. If you decide to participate, you are

free to withdraw at any time without penalty and prejudice to pre-existing entitlements, and any collected data with be withdrawn from the database and not included in the study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (EE REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participants; rights and ethical conduct or research, contact the Chair of the EE REB at (780) 492-3751.

Sincerely,

Trista Knoetzke

**Please complete the following and return it to the researcher the time of the interview.**

*******

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I give my consent to participate in the above study.

Participant's name: _____ Date:_____

_____

Signature: _____

## Appendix C: Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell me how you became a psychologist working with Edmonton and area school age children
2. Describe to me a typical work day.
3. Describe to me the types of referrals you receive.
4. Describe to me the types of clients you work with.
5. Describe to me their cultural background.
6. Describe to me your cultural background. What are your beliefs? What are your values?
7. Does the culture of the student affect their performance on the psyched? Why or why not?
8. Does the culture of the student effect how you assess them?
9. Describe to me a memorable story working with a culturally diverse client.
10. Do you have the competence to work effectively with culturally diverse students? Why or why not?
11. In your opinion, what are the critical components of being a cross culturally competent psychologist.

## Appendix D: Steps in Typological Analysis:

1. Identify typologies to be analyzed
2. Read the data, making entries related to your typologies
3. Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet
4. Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies
5. Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of your patters
6. Decide if your patterns are supported by the data, and search the data for non-examples of your patterns
7. Look for relationships among the patterns identified
8. Write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations
9. Select data excerpts that support your generalization

(Hatch, 2002, p. 153)